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ABSTRACT

The relationships between improvements to facilities and accurate enrollment counts and an academic plan for the District of Columbia public schools were explored in a hearing that was part of a series on the D.C. public schools. Representative Thomas Davis (Virginia) spoke of the progress being made in improving the D.C. schools and the great deal that remained to be done. Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton (District of Columbia) also praised the efforts of the appointed interim administrators and noted the tasks ahead for the school system. The first panel began with remarks by Patricia Harvey, director of urban education for the National Center on Education and the Economy, who spoke of the importance of prevention, early intervention, acceleration, and accountability. Marlene Berlin, chair of a parents' coalition, talked about parent participation and community involvement. Delabian Rice-Thurston, director of Parents United, focused on standards and funding. A general discussion followed, with emphasis on the importance of parent participation. The second panel of the day began with remarks by Kathleen Patterson, member of the D.C. City Council, who talked about the importance of small classes and small schools in long-range planning. The second panel member was Joyce Ladner, member of the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority (Control Board), who discussed the recent appointment of Arlene Ackerman as Superintendent of Schools. Bruce MacLaury, Chairman of the D.C. Public Schools Emergency Board of Trustees, reviewed some of the needs of the school system as Ms. Ackerman assumes her position. Remarks by Julius W. Becton, retiring appointed Chief Executive Officer and Superintendent of the school system, and Arlene Ackerman, recently appointed Superintendent, rounded out the discussions. Prepared statements of the witnesses are included in the hearing report. (SLD)

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OVERSIGHT ON THE ACADEMIC PLAN FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ED 424 327

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

APRIL 3, 1998

Serial No. 105–147

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OVERSIGHT ON THE ACADEMIC PLAN FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 1998

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:30 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Thomas M. Davis (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Davis and Norton.

Staff present: Ron Hamm, staff director; Howard Denis, counsel; Bob Dix and Anne Mack, professional staff members; Ellen Brown, clerk; Cedric Hendricks, minority counsel; and Denise Wilson, minority professional staff member.

Mr. DAVIS. Good morning. Welcome. Today, this subcommittee continues its series of oversight hearings dealing with reform issues in the District of Columbia public schools. On January 23, we held a hearing involving the 1997 repair program and the master facilities plan. On March 13, the subcommittee addressed the key issue of an accurate student enrollment count. Today, we will explore the relationship between these issues and the development and implementation of an effective academic plan. Such a plan is essential in order to produce improvement in student achievement and overall school reform.

I want to acknowledge and thank all of the stakeholders for their efforts to date toward achieving necessary reform and s .bilization of the D.C. public schools. There is no element of D.C. revitalization that is more important to the District and its future than reestablishing the D.C. public schools as one of the finest public school systems in the Nation.

The Control Board, the Emergency Board of Trustees, and the Board of Education are currently addressing policy issues which deal with enrollment eligibility for the public schools, such as verifiable proof of residency. There does not appear to be an ongoing proliferation of roof or other repair issues with facilities themselves. So although there has been a fair amount of hammering and teeth gnashing over the means by which certain tasks are accomplished, it is clear that progress is yet being made. But make no mistake, there is much that still has to be done, both short-term and long-term.

As we recall, the Control Board declared a state of emergency in the D.C. public school system on November 15, 1996, established a nine-member Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees, a position of chief executive officer-superintendent, and General Julius W. Becton, Jr., was appointed to the post. Among the many challenges that faced the school system leadership was the need to address the fundamental issues of student achievement and development and implementation of a comprehensive academic plan. Accordingly, in August 1997, Mrs. Arlene Ackerman was appointed as chief academic officer. Mrs. Ackerman came to the position with enormous credentials and tremendous accolades and she hit the ground running.

On October 20, 1997, Mrs. Ackerman released the final version of the District of Columbia Public Schools' Academic Plan for 1997 and 1998. Mrs. Ackerman acknowledged that academic planning is work in progress and committed to providing regular status updates to the public school community and to make revisions to the plan as determined to be necessary and appropriate.

Today, we are going to examine issues that are inextricably connected to the ability to be successful in this bold effort. These issues include the administrative support infrastructure; the state-of-the-art technology plan; ensuring the security, health and safety of all buildings, students and staff; and helping students with special needs. Also, there has to be coordination of facilities, enrollment, staffing, instructional materials, and other resources necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of academic and social achievement for all public school students in the District of Columbia.

While many, but not all, agree that positive changes are being made in reforming the city's public school system, much remains to be done. An effective academic plan is driven by a set of goals and objectives developed through a consensus building exercise. It must seek out and respect community input and invite community participation. The academic plan must recognize the value of collaboration between professional staff, parents and students. This is critical to the overall activities which are necessary to reestablish the D.C. public school system as the premier public school system in the Nation.

I would now yield to Delegate Norton, the ranking member of this subcommittee, for any opening statement she may wish to make.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this timely hearing. This oversight hearing is for the purpose of helping the subcommittee to evaluate progress, of indicating congressional concerns, and of detailing goals that Congress and every D.C. resident have a right to expect from those who have accepted responsibility for the school children of the District. As all know well, the District of Columbia public schools have received greater attention from both the House and the Senate than any other function of the city government, and justifiably so. When children are involved, the city's responsibility is at its greatest.

Despite setbacks, the school system has made documented progress during General Julius Becton's tenure. General Becton has given diligent and dedicated service. As an officer and a gen-

tleman, I know he expected criticism and he has received some. I hope that he leaves with the understanding that he has much to show for his efforts, especially when measured by what came before, and that they are indeed appreciated. To his credit, General Becton announced his intention to leave at a time calculated to do the least injury and to allow an appropriate transition. One of his achievements is his participation in the selection of Dr. Arlene Ackerman as the superintendent designate for the school system.

Like Charles Ramsey, who is likely to be confirmed as the new police chief, Dr. Ackerman deserves the support of every Washingtonian. Dr. Ackerman and Mr. Ramsey have not had a chance to lead here. The troubled agencies they inherit require that both administrators get the opportunity to show what they can do. Although hired as chief academic officer, the search for Dr. Ackerman was openly and explicitly conducted as a search for the next superintendent. I thank and commend the Authority for moving to appoint her without delay instead of allowing the school system to languish or, worse, destabilize, especially given crucial new initiatives about to take off. Any delay in the appointment would have been unfair to the school system and to Dr. Ackerman and would have raised serious concerns here in the Congress. She has succeeded in complex school systems before. Everyone needs to stand back and let her take this one on.

Dr. Ackerman's quick action ending social promotion and the details of her new S.T.A.R.S. program show an administrator unafraid to take bold action. It was like a cool breeze on a hot day to learn of Dr. Ackerman's plan to have children read the equivalent of 25 books. We will look for and expect more of the same.

As part of my campaign to go to the House floor frequently to report progress in the District, I have already used debate time to sing the praises of the S.T.A.R.S. program and the new standards. I am pleased that S.T.A.R.S. is being designed not only for children who have failed, but also to keep others from failing and to help still others to improve.

I have also spoken on the House floor of my strong opposition to yet another vouchers fight when Dr. Ackerman's S.T.A.R.S. program badly needs the $7 million proposed to go for vouchers and, even then, would be $3.5 million short. Dr. Ackerman came to the District too late for the S.T.A.R.S. program to be included in this year's budget. Thus, the District will be forced to borrow from Peter to pay Paul to put S.T.A.R.S. into effect unless Congress puts its money where its proverbial mouth has been on helping D.C. school children. Whatever good might have been done for 2,000 children would be multiplied many times over for the 20,000 children expected to enroll in the S.T.A.R.S. program this year.

Although encouraged by the beginning of progress, I am clear that there is no part of the present school system that does not need to be overturned. The best approach to our schools is to question every single system in place and then to map a detailed timeframed plan for their replacement. The school system must be at pains to perhaps avoid the most significant error the Authority has made in management reform, not working from a rigorous and detailed plan with accountability targets to be achieved or revised as circumstances indicate. By setting both specific education goals and

specific management goals, school officials will know not only what they must do to achieve success, they also will have a greater sense of accomplishment when they have met goals they themselves have set. When the system develops its goals in conjunction with every segment of the community, it will not be subjected to the loudest voices but will be accountable to the community as a whole. Further, Dr. Ackerman cannot fully succeed unless she finds ways to do what the Trustees have not done, achieve a close working relationship with the elected board, which will get full responsibility for the school system in just 2 years. Dr. Ackerman apparently already has begun to establish a productive relationship with the elected board.

I graduated from Bruce Elementary School of Banneker, when it was a junior high school, and of Dunbar High School. These schools were segregated by the Congress of the United States. Even in a separate and unequal system, the schools I attended managed to send many of us to the best colleges and universities in the country. I do not seek for my hometown a system that is as good as the segregated schools I attended. That would be just one more example of setting our sights way too low. I believe that the city is finally ready for the best and is fully able to attain it.

May I once again thank the chairman. I welcome today's witnesses and look forward to their testimony. May I also note the presence of Council Member Kathy Patterson in particular and welcome her to this hearing.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me, if I can, call up our first panel to testify. Ms. Patricia Harvey, senior fellow and director of urban education for the National Center on Education and the Economy; Ms. Marlene Berlin, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Parents Coalition; and Ms. Delabian Rice-Thurston of Parents United for the D.C. public schools. If you would come forward. It is the policy of this committee that all witnesses be sworn before they testify, so if you would raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, may I ask for a point of personal privilege?

Mr. DAVIS. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, this is the last day and the last hearing for Cedric Hendricks, who as you know has ably staffed this subcommittee, among others. Mr. Chairman, Cedric was my first legislative director. Mr. Chairman, when he abandoned me to go to the committee, that was one thing. That was bad enough. But I am here to report, sir, that Cedric is abandoning the committee altogether to go to a committee of a different jurisdiction. I will not call that what in some quarters it might be called, but we are losing Cedric altogether. I have warned him that there is experience and understanding and subtlety of intellect that cannot be replaced, and so I don't care what committee he goes to, I am going to have to negotiate with that chairman for him to be on call in case of need.

Mr. Chairman, the most important thing perhaps to say about Cedric is the standard of excellence he has set for people, other staff on the committee and for staff in my open office. I would like to expose Cedric to the entire District government so they know

what excellence means. He has brought all of the skills that one associates, all of the traits that one associates with the word "excellence." Not only is he smart and as we are trying to tell the youngsters in D.C. what smart means, is doing the hard work that in fact makes you smart, he is an indefatigable worker. He doesn't know how to say no. You give him an impossible task, and the usual notions that people say, "Well, I don't know how you're going to do that" simply doesn't come out of his mouth. He does the impossible. He knows how to negotiate his way out of difficult decisions instead of throwing up his hands or engaging in confrontational or contentious activity with others. It is a very unusual set of skills to find in a staff person.

He is taking all of this with him to the Education and Workforce Committee. He leaves an extraordinarily irreplaceable deficit. But that's all right. You can run, but you cannot hide from me, Cedric Hendricks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you. Let me just say that he is leaving this committee but he is going over to the Committee on Education and the Workforce. That is relevant to today. I guess one thing Ms. Norton didn't note, at least he is staying on the Democratic side. He's not coming over to our side.

Ms. NORTON. He hasn't lost his mind, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. I tell you that Cedric has been a good partner in working with us. Cedric, we are going to miss you. You have added not only a strong professionalism and a high standard, but you know how to work things out behind the scenes when we disagree. You have been very, very helpful. Sometimes when Ms. Norton and I get a little stormy, she has Cedric, I have Ron Hamm and Howie Denis, and they end up on the sidelines and working it out. That is how important he has been. I know he is going to be successful at whatever he does. I will miss you as well. We appreciate all the efforts that you have done in writing some of the major landmark decisions over the last 4 years that have come out of this committee.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Chairman, may I note also that Mr. David Cann, another councilmember, has come into this hearing and welcome him as well.

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Cann, thank you. I welcome both you and Ms. Patterson. I am going to ask unanimous consent that any written statements made by our panel be part of the permanent record and ask if you can try to limit your oral statements to 5 minutes. We have your testimony and read it and are ready to go to questions, so if you want your oral testimony to be shorter, that is fine, because your whole statement will be part of the record and that will give us a little more time for questions. I am going to begin with Ms. Harvey, followed by Ms. Berlin and Ms. Rice-Thurston.

STATEMENTS OF PATRICIA HARVEY, SENIOR FELLOW AND DIRECTOR URBAN EDUCATION, NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY; MARLENE BERLIN, CHAIR, AD-HOC PARENTS COALITION; AND DELABIAN RICE-THURSTON, PARENTS UNITED FOR THE D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Ms. HARVEY. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. Again, I am Pat Harvey. I'm a senior fellow at the

National Center on Education and the Economy. The center has been working with the District of Columbia public schools over the last 3 to 4 months. I am here to testify that I believe that the District is really moving forward.

Those of us in education around the country look for some very, very key aspects to an education plan and we see those in place in the District of Columbia schools. First and foremost is prevention. That means that we need to make sure that there is an education program in place that will not allow kids as they begin in our schools to fall through the cracks. It is a solid education program that enables them to reach high standards.

The second piece that is extremely important in all education plans is early intervention; at the moment that kids begin to have some problems, that there are mechanisms in place that will allow them to quickly and rapidly catch up.

The third component is to have a system that will allow our students to accelerate, and those of our student population that have fallen through the cracks over past times are able to accelerate as quickly as possible. And then the fourth and the most important part is an accountability system for all. We see these four components all in place in the District of Columbia's education plan.

I need to say, also, that I commend the District for the selection of Mrs. Ackerman as the chief executive officer and the superintendent of schools. She is well respected all across the country. Around the country and, in fact, I have spent the last 10 days in various cities, and I can't tell you how they have commended the District for the selection. She is recognized as a strong and effective leader who will be able to garner the support necessary to put in place the strong and effective instructional program.

Now, the fourth piece that I talked about was an accountability system. It doesn't make sense for us to continue as an educational agency without having accountability for our results. That means both rewards and consequences for all. This summer the District will face the first time when kids will not have social promotion. This is going to be very difficult. It's important for all of us who are working with the District to make sure we get through these first and initial steps in accountability for students. I can tell you, we across the country have not allowed our children to work toward their highest level of expectations, not our parents, not our students, not our faculty nor our leaders. We have made it far, far too easy for them. When we listen to students across the country, they say to us, raise the standards, we can do the work. That is exactly what we are going to see in the District of Columbia this year.

I believe that the essence of what needs to be in place is in the District of Columbia's education plan. It is going to definitely move forward under the leadership of Ms. Ackerman. It is a brand new beginning for the District.

Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much. Ms. Berlin.

Ms. BERLIN. Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, thank you for this opportunity to present my testimony as a parent of children in the D.C. public schools and chair of the Ad Hoc Parents Coalition, an organization that has worked over the past 5 years

to give parents greater voice in influencing policy decisions that impact their children's education.

In responding to your request to comment on the academic plan released in October, I would first really like to address what you mention in the last paragraph of your statement, which is to talk about the process of developing such a plan.

Education reform efforts in major urban areas are not accomplished without many bumps along the way. It is a difficult and an arduous task. To be successful, all the major players must take part in developing a plan so that the whole community can claim ownership. This has not yet occurred. The effort has suffered as a result.

As General Becton admitted when he announced his resignation, he said he should have involved the parents and the public more. We must all be part of developing this plan. This is a messy and time consuming process, but it is necessary. If this does not happen, the people of this city, from teachers, principals, parents, students and tax-paying citizens, will not feel a sense of ownership for this effort.

This is crucial to improving the schools. As a staff person at the Department of Education asked me, why doesn't the council provide more support and budget requests for education? I responded, when the public is not engaged, there is no sense of ownership and little demand for local officials to support the reform plan. Just like Congress, the public wants to know that the present level of funding is spent effectively before more money is allocated.

It is not too late to engage the public in this process. I would like to suggest something similar to the budget simulation process held by the chief financial officer, Anthony Williams, this past Tuesday night. Tuesday night, members of the community were invited to develop a citizens education budget for next year. There were about 20 of us, and we worked with the enhancements that the school system wanted for next year's budget. In essence, we are working with a 2-year academic plan, the second year academic plan. What was very clear from the discussion and the process was a definite discrepancy between where the community wanted to go with school reform and where the school administration was going.

The group that was present on Tuesday night focused on funding to improve teacher quality through the development and implementation of an evaluation and termination process for teachers, funding of summer institutes for teachers. Other priorities were funding for pre-kindergarten for all 4-year-old children, and vocational education for high school students.

The group also wanted to find a mechanism to give local schools more discretionary resources. This came in the form of providing to the schools the equivalent of one FTE to utilize how they so desire. Money was taken out of summer school and other areas to fund these priorities. We need a process of engagement such as this to reconcile these differences of vision. The greatest gift of leadership that General Becton can give this community is to engage us in this type of exercise. We need the leadership and process to do this.

I invite General Becton and Mrs. Ackerman to come to the table with members of the community to develop a 3-year academic plan

which was mandated by the Control Board by June, one that the community can and will support, and urge local officials to support.

Now, to get back to the academic plan. We are approaching the end of the 1-year plan. I acknowledge that an incredible effort has been set in motion. But I am left with many questions as I look at this 1-year plan. How am I to know what of this plan was implemented and what was not, what was changed, what moneys were reprogrammed? For example, how will summer school be monitored? How will we know if those students who were supposed to attend actually attend? Will having buildings air-conditioned for some children predict better outcomes for those than those in unair-conditioned buildings?

As a parent and a taxpayer, I want to know what was successful and what did not work. Primary to answering these questions are knowing how many children are being served and the number of personnel serving them. These are still unanswered to my satisfaction.

These questions lead me to one of the top five recommendations coming out of the parent task force, establish meaningful partnerships with parents, universities, professional associations and other groups to evaluate, monitor and refine the implementation, progress and effectiveness of the plan. I would also like to add to this and make these results public. We will only be able to improve the schools when we are able not only to tout our successes but also acknowledge and learn from our failures. We expect this from our children and we should expect it from the school system.

What we all want is a school system that not only addresses the problems that presently exist but also builds on and strengthens our successes. We want an education system that is attractive to families of all income levels, ethnic and racial backgrounds with children of differing abilities and aptitudes. We want a school system that will work for all of us. Good schools will attract and keep families in the District and greatly contribute to the revitalization of our city.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Berlin follows:]

Testimony by Marlene Berlin, Chair
Ad Hoc Parents Coalition
before the
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight
on the Academic Plan
April 3, 1998

Mr. Chairman and subcommittee members, thank you for this opportunity to present my testimony as a parent of children in the DC Public Schools and Chair of the Ad Hoc Parents Coalition, an organization that has worked over the last five years to give parents a greater voice in influencing policy decisions that impact their children's education. In the late spring I was asked by the former Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Musgrove, to organize and coordinate a parent task force to evaluate the education plan. This group submitted its recommendations which are attached just as Dr. Musgrove resigned. We brought these recommendations to Mrs. Ackerman, and have met with her three times to share our concerns about the quality of education for our children. Our concerns focus around three major issues: Improving the performance of teachers and principals, strengthening the role of parents in improving their schools, and improving the capability and effectiveness of support by central administration to local schools.

In responding to your request to comment on the Academic Plan released in October, I would first like to talk about the process of developing such a plan. Educational reform efforts in major urban areas are not accomplished without many bumps along the way. It is a difficult and arduous task. To be successful, all the major players must take part in developing the plan so that the whole community can claim ownership. This has not yet occurred, and the effort has suffered as a result. As General Becton admitted when he announced his resignation, he should have involved parents and the public more. We must all be part of developing this plan. This is a messy and time consuming process, but it is necessary. If this does not happen, the people of this city, from the teachers, principals, parents, students, and tax paying citizens will not feel a sense of ownership for this effort. This is crucial to improving our schools. As a staff person at DOE asked me, "Why doesn't the Council provide more support in budget requests for education." I responded, "When the public is not engaged, there is no sense of ownership and little demand for local officials to support it."

It is not too late to engage the public in this process. I would like to suggest something similar to the budget simulation process held by the Chief Financial Officer, Anthony Williams. Tuesday night members of the community were invited to develop a citizen's education budget for next year. There were about twenty of us, and we worked with the enhancements that the school system wanted for next year's budget. In essence we were working with year two of an academic plan. What was very clear from the discussion and the process was a definite discrepancy between where the community wanted to go with school reform and where the school administration was going. The group that was present last night, focused on improving teacher quality through the development and implementation of an evaluation and termination process for teachers, and more money for staff development in summer institutes for teachers. Another priority was funding prekindergarten for all four year old children. The group wanted to find a mechanism to give local schools more discretionary resources. This came in the form of providing to the schools the equivalent of one FTE to utilize how they so desire. Money was taken out summer school and other areas to fund these priorities.

We need a process of engagement, such as this, to reconcile these differences. The greatest gift of leadership that General Becton can give this community is to engage us in this type of exercise. We need the leadership and process to do this. I invite General Becton and Arlene Ackerman to come to

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the table with members of the community to develop a three year academic plan by June that the community can and will support and urge local officials to support.

As we approach the end of the one year plan, I acknowledge that an incredible effort has been set in motion. But I am left with many questions as I look at this one year plan? How am I to know what of this plan was implemented and what was not. What was changed? An massive campaign was organized to improve reading, but has the 60 minute mathematics block been implemented and were mathematics resource teachers assigned to every school with students scoring below basic? What is the status of the technology plan? Will the nine and a half million dollars be spent in developing the District of Columbia Academy and what is this academy? Do we have the 16 new parent resource centers? Has security improved at schools? How are we to know? Has certification of teachers been aligned to New standards? Has there been an increase in the number of teachers meeting the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification standards? Have mentor teachers been assigned to new teachers? What are the responsibilities of these mentor teachers? Will there be an annual survey of students, school staff and parents? What is the policy for reconstituting chronically failing schools? What schools are being redesigned? What models are being used? What is the progress of decentralizing responsibility resources and authority to the school level? What pilot schools have been chosen to have greater discretion over use of funds and staff? When are we going to have an accurate enrollment count?

Those questions lead me to one of the top five recommendations coming out of the Parent Task Force: Establish meaningful partnerships with parents, universities, professional associations and other groups to evaluate, monitor, and refine the implementation progress and effectiveness. I would like to add to this and make the results public. We will only be able to improve the schools when we are able to not only tout our successes, but also acknowledge and learn from our failures. We expect this from our children, and we should expect it from the school system.

What we all want is a school system that not only addresses the problems that presently exist, but also builds on and strengthens our successes. We want an education system that is attractive to families of all income levels, ethnic and racial backgrounds with children of differing abilities and aptitudes. We want a school system that will work for all of us. Good schools will attract and keep families in the District and greatly contribute to the revitalization of our city.

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Attachment

Five Top Recommendation of the Parent Task Force to Evaluate the One Year Academic Plan, August 1998:

Those are our answers to the question, "What specific improvements are most needed now?"

1. Develop grade-specific curriculum handbooks for parents and students. Handbooks must outline curricular content, objectives, and skill mastery goals for each subject and grade. In addition, establish specific examples of what constitutes "good work" in writing and math;

2. Provide to every school librarians, classroom aides, guidance counselors, reading and math specialists, and special education coordinators. In addition, revise and reduce student teacher ratios, particularly in targeted assisted schools;

3. Conduct annual standardized testing for every grade of the next three years. Test taking skills should be integrated into the school curriculum. Avoid "teaching to the test." Employ low-cost, performance based assessment tools in order to ensure financial feasibility (e.g. Oyster developed a math assessment tool; Bancroft is using a criterion referenced, easy-to administer instruments). Incorporate the use of portfolios in student assessment;

4. Mandate teachers require and review meaningful homework in every subject, and provide timely feedback to students. Develop a regular format (i.e. "Friday folder" and daily assignment books for elementary and middle schools, and detailed syllabi for high schools) to ensure compliance. Communicate with parents about classroom expectations, activities, tests, projects, field trips, and representative examples of student work. Develop homework guidelines by grade and subject matter. Include in curriculum handbook.

5. Establish meaningful partnerships with parents, universities, professional associations, and other groups to evaluate, monitor, and refine implementation progress and effectiveness of the plan.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much. Ms. Rice-Thurston.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. Good morning, I am Delabian Rice-Thurston. I direct Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools. Mr. Davis and Ms. Norton, other members of the committee, I appreciate this chance to talk about our public schools.

I am the mom of a D.C. public school graduate who is a sophomore at Columbia University and a National Merit Scholar. I am the mom of a 10th grader at Wilson High School, so I know our public schools are capable of excellence. The most important question for this hearing is not the academic plan itself, but what we're going to do to achieve its objective, which is high student achievement.

Whatever the plan is, we must do four things. We must have capable teachers and other staff to carry out the plan. That means competitive salaries, intensive teacher training, rigorous evaluation and good management.

We must stop making plans. Our school system has made a number since 1989. We need to implement them, not use plans as a way of evading action. We need continuity, stability and unity in D.C. public school leadership and control. There has been too much turnover. We are about to go through another one. We need stability, so that this plan can be implemented. We need people making decisions who understand our schools and how they operate, and who are working in concert instead of against each other. We need enough money behind the plan to make it work and to hold leadership accountable for implementation instead of giving them the excuse that they didn't have enough money.

If you notice, we have given you the per pupil spending as agreed to by the jurisdictions in our inner suburbs. The District of Columbia is higher than no jurisdiction save Prince George's County. Arlington is spending $9,300 per pupil compared to our city's $6,500, or basically $6,600. This is no way for a school system with exceptionally low income students to be competitive. Our touchstone for evaluating any D.C. public school plan is Goals 2000. The whole District of Columbia community, parents, the business community, in 1996 developed this plan. It represents real Districtwide consensus. So as we look at what our school system is trying to do, any plan, the one adopted on October 20, we look to see if it is consistent with Goals 2000. It is. But it has two major overall problems.

First, it's too general to be very useful at this point. For example, the special education operation is severely dysfunctional. The plan says simply, review and implement appropriate service delivery and staffing models. We have been planning to do that for years. We need to do it. The plan has far too many items in it, so the school system couldn't do it in 1 year if it had to, and it has done some but not much of it.

So we prefer to look at the supplement of that plan that Ms. Ackerman prepared at her first press briefing. We again find four elements. Clear performance standards with content standards and promotion requirements are in the offing. They are actually being implemented. An infrastructure with realignment of resources, with systemwide accountability and monitoring of student progress is in operation. Professional development is under way. A public

engagement process is not where we would always like it to be, but it is under way.

The strengths that we see in the plan in the supplement and their implementation are a concentration of activities that are focusing on reading and literacy, an establishment of higher standards of content and performance in testing students on nationally competitive basis, and holding students to those standards. We have a real crisis right now as people are contemplating the Stanford nine test. We know that we are being held accountable.

A requirement and monitoring of individual school improvement. Stanford nine is an integral part of that. A specific system of principal evaluation that concentrates on student achievement. Fifty percent of principal appraisal and teacher appraisal will be based on student achievement. Serious summer school requirements that focus on real skills development in math and reading. Yes. The use of Roots and Wings as well as Success For All to work on our poorly performing schools. A steadily downward movement in the number of central school staff. Yes. An acknowledgment of the importance of parent and community involvement. Yes.

The weaknesses. Very little parent and community involvement in fact. We want to see, for example, our local school restructuring teams working better. Teacher training, which is intensive and extensive but thin. We want to see improvement in teacher training.

The safety nets for students that are not meeting the standards is underfunded. We are looking forward to summer school but we know it needs adequate funding, and we know that our school system's day-to-day operations must do better at training our students academically. Public tutoring is not sufficient to upgrade our students' achievement.

D.C. teachers salaries are 8 to 15 percent below the average salaries in our suburbs. Attracting high quality teachers under those circumstances is very difficult. Special education is dysfunctional, but we're looking nationally for a head of that division. Language services are lacking. Local school autonomy and local school restructuring teams we must upgrade. We must look at our infrastructure systems, personnel, budget, supply, which are dysfunctional and sometimes harmful.

We know that Mrs. Ackerman will address these weaknesses. We know that we will see progress because we are not going to go back on the use of the Stanford nine as a test. Contrary to some of the statements made, we have abolished social promotion. We abolished social promotion in 1985. But the results were so difficult for us to accept with student failure that we went back on our word. Under this administration, I believe we will hold firmly to high standards and we will see our students meeting them.

We need the Congress to adopt the proposed per capita funding formula. We need the Congress to state that school system funding will be the first priority of our city as they look at their budget, so that we do not have to confront cuts to the school system's budget once we do have our per capita funding.

We would also like to see, for example, a D.C. withholding statement as the primary proof of residence. We know that one of the weaknesses of the funding formula is that no matter how many students we have being educated you are going to count as our en-

rollment resident students. It is imperative that all students who are in our school system have parents who are contributing financially to our city. We would like for the school system to start using the withholding from D.C. taxes as part of the way that residence is established in our city.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Rice-Thurston follows:]

Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools

1300 19th St., N.W. Suite 330 Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 833-4766

STATEMENT OF DELABIAN L. RICE-THURSTON
PARENTS UNITED FOR THE D.C. PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM AND OVERSIGHT
OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

April 3, 1998

Good morning. I am Delabian Rice-Thurston, Executive Director of Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools since 1983. I am the mother of one son currently enrolled in the D.C. Public Schools and another recent graduate who with his D.C. Public School education is now attending Columbia University on a National Merit Scholarship. Our public schools are capable of excellence.

The most important question behind this hearing is not the Academic Plan itself but what all of us can do to achieve its objective -- high student achievement. Whatever the Plan is, if it is to work we must:

- Have capable teachers and other staff to carry it out, which means competitive salaries, intensive training, and rigorous evaluation, then employing good management to nurture good performers and dismiss bad.
- Stop making grand plans, as the school system and numerous other parties have been doing non-stop since 1989, and do a good job of carrying one out instead. Planning has become an excuse for evading action. It is time to fix on a promising approach with steps that are consistent with each other, then implement them well.
- Have continuity, stability and unity in DCPS leadership and control; there is too much turnover, too many changes of direction, and far too many different officials in different offices making decisions or interfering with them, though most of them know little or nothing about our schools and how they operate.
- Put enough money behind the plan to let it work and hold the leadership accountable instead of giving it the excuse of insufficient resources. This year D.C. Public Schools spends less per pupil than all but one of the surrounding suburbs spent last year, according to the method of calculation used by the Metropolitan Area Boards of Education.

Alexandria FY 1997	$8,999	Montgomery FY 1997	$7,650
Arlington FY 1997	$9,305	Prince George's FY 1998	$6,171
Fairfax County FY 1997	$7,120	**DC FY 1998**	**$6,599**

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Our touchstone for evaluating any DCPS plan is the DC Goals 2000 Plan for Educational Improvement, completed in summer 1996. This general plan represents a real District-wide consensus on major strategies, objectives and priorities because it was based on multiple sources of input from parents, community, school and elected officials through all the different planning processes starting in 1989.

The October 20, 1997 Plan is largely consistent with the Goals 2000 Plan, but has two major overall problems. First, it is too general to be very useful at this point. For example, we know that most of the special education operation is severely dysfunctional, but all the Plan says is "Review and implement appropriate service delivery and staffing models linked to a new Special Education strategic plan." The school system has "planned" to do this for many years. Moreover, the October 20 Plan has far too many items in it -- the school system could not possibly do all of that in one year, and, in fact has not done much of it.

Therefore, I wish to call your attention to a supplement to that Plan that Ms. Ackerman presented at her first press briefing. This document is much more focused, selective and specific. We support the focus there, which is highly consistent with the priorities of the Goals 2000 Plan:

- Clear performance standards, content standards and promotion requirements
- Infrastructure -- realignment of resources, system wide accountability and monitoring of student progress
- Professional development
- Public engagement

The strengths that we see in the Plan, the supplement and their implementation are:

- The concentration of activities focusing on reading and literacy
- The establishment of higher standards of content and performance, testing students on a nationally competitive basis and holding students to the standards
- The requirement and monitoring of individual school improvement
- Specific system of principal evaluation concentrating on student achievement
- Serious summer school requirements focusing on real skills development in math and reading
- Use of the Roots and Wings program and other assistance for poorly performing schools
- Steady downward movement in the number of central office staff
- Acknowledgment of the importance of parent and community involvement

These strengths are in place. The weaknesses:

- Very little parent or community involvement has occurred in fact, with consequent mistakes in specific planning and implementation as inexperienced newcomers tried to do the job all by themselves.
- Teacher training, which needs to be both intensive and extensive, is thin, under funded and not mandatory.
- The safety net for students not meeting the standards is also thin and under funded.

Summer school and public tutoring are not sufficient, particularly when the introduction of the standards and the test has *preceded* teacher training, curriculum development and teacher evaluation

- D.C. teacher salaries are 8-15% less than the average salaries and 12-29% less than the highest salaries offered teachers of the same experience and degree level in the surrounding suburbs (see the back of this page)
- Special education is dysfunctional in almost every regard, and English as a Second Language services are sorely lacking
- Local school autonomy and well-functioning Local School Restructuring Teams with real responsibility are part of the Plan only on paper, not in fact
- The infrastructure systems -- personnel, budget, supply, information -- are still so dysfunctional as to do more damage than good for local schools and their students

We feel confident that the Ackerman administration will address these weaknesses since, in some instances, the process has begun. We are hearing reports that NCEE training for teachers and principals will be mandatory. Ms. Ackerman is searching nationwide for a Special Education director. The system has frightened principals, teachers, parents and students alike by making the nationally respected SAT 9 test count in determining whether students will be promoted, and by making improved student performance the main criterion for high evaluations. The administration is convinced that our students and teachers can meet the challenge and are not backing down. The administration is giving our children a more extensive summer learning opportunity than we have ever seen before. Parents United is helping the system get the word out about all opportunities for upgraded learning and helping parents understand that we can have academically competent kids.

We need the Congress to adopt the proposed per capita funding formula when you receive it. The convention center has a committed revenue stream, and our schools deserve the same. An adequate and predictable funding level should be the first claim on the District of Columbia's spending, so that we can carry out an academic plan without diluting it, so we can recruit and keep good teachers, train all our teachers to be more effective, and provide the safety net to help children meet demanding standards.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Parents United for the D.C. Public Schools

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D.C. TEACHERS SALARIES
COMPARED WITH SALARIES IN SURROUNDING SUBURBS

Annual Teacher Salaries
1997 - 1998

School System	Minimum	Difference	Maximum*	Difference
District of Columbia	$27,234		$56,296	
Alexandria City	$30,554		$64,960	
Arlington County	$29,343		$72,423	
Fairfax County	$29,567		$65,502	
Montgomery County	$30,285		$63,553	
Prince George's County	$27,474		$58,243	
Average (excluding DC)	$29,445	$2,211	$64,936	$8,640
Percent more than DC		8.1%		15.3%
Highest	$30,554	$3,320	$72,423	$16,127
Percent more than DC		12.2%		28.6%
If increased from 1997-98 level				
5% increase for D.C.	$28,596		$59,111	
10% increase for D.C.	$29,957		$61,926	
12% increase for D.C.	$30,502		$63,052	
15% increase for D.C.	$31,319		$64,740	

Source: Internet and telephone survey of distncts

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Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much. In fact, thank all of you. Let me start the questioning with Ms. Harvey. First of all, thank you very much for coming. I understand you came in late last night. You've been out late the past few days. We appreciate your willingness to be here and lending a national perspective to this.

Where does the D.C. school system stand at this time nationally compared with other urban school districts?

Ms. HARVEY. I think that any educator who came in a year ago or 5 months ago would have been appalled. Every system within the D.C. public schools was broken. Arlene Ackerman has said it over and over again. I was here about a month before her and noticed the same kinds of things. I just cannot commend her enough for the way she has been able to roll up her sleeves and get started and move forward. This is a very, very difficult job. It is one that most superintendents don't have to start at this level. They usually start with some systems in place so they can build forward.

Mr. DAVIS. So you feel a lot better now about it than you did. You feel some direction and vision that you maybe didn't have a few months ago?

Ms. HARVEY. Absolutely. One key point is—in setting a vision—is to get the whole district to be focused on achievement. You would almost have to live under a rock in D.C. not to know that there is a focus on academic achievement. It is said everywhere, you hear the comments coming back from parents, from students, from staff. Everybody knows, it is not inputs that's important, it is outcomes.

So that's the first step, along with all the other things that have to be done to help this district grow.

Mr. DAVIS. Are there any role models that the city could look at to use? We talked in our last hearing—about other cities around the country, where the counting seemed to work. Boston, where they had methodologies that were built in instead of reinventing the wheel, have worked.

As we look at the totality of education, are there any role models?

Ms. HARVEY. I think that that's what you see in the essence of this plan. What we know across the country and across the world is that the first important thing is setting high standards for kids. Everyone has to know what the mark is, what kids are supposed to be able to do. That begins the next leg of the road in terms of how you assess this, how do you know when they've actually achieved the standards. And then the curriculum and instruction, that's important. So yes, the District is using, I'm sure, the best practices from across the country. They stand out to me in the plan.

The other part that is important in terms of looking at what's happening in other cities is that you can see there is a focus, a strong focus on accountability. And so, yes, there are some similarities to the work in Seattle, naturally, the work in Chicago, the work in New York, all over the country.

Mr. DAVIS. Do you think the plan basically draws on all those role models?

Ms. HARVEY. Yes, it's got all the strong points.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me ask all of you a question. I think we talked before about the congressional impatience when we mentioned how

Congress looks at education. Changes in the city, to some Members, just aren't coming fast enough. Of course it took the city a long time to slide down. You don't fix it overnight, you don't put up information systems overnight. You don't train and hire and retain people overnight. We know it is a much longer job. We deal with this every day when Members are impatient.

We saw last week that one of the news stations talked about federalizing the police department in the city. Members said yes, it's a great idea, because they are very impatient with the pace of change. Nowhere is that more probably apparent than with education, where there is no real quick fix. It is a longer well thought out plan that's going to take some time.

We are up here addressing charter schools, vouchers, and all of these other issues. I would like to get your reaction to some of these congressional innovations that could be used on the city. Let me start with Ms. Rice-Thurston on that.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. I'd like to start a little farther back.

Mr. DAVIS. Fine.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. When I was looking for schools that had been closed historically, one of the things that I discovered was somewhere when we were under the Congress, about every 30 years, there would be a major report on the difficulties of D.C. schools, when we were under the Congress. While I understand your impatience, I would like to throw in that you were never able to deal with us well. One of the difficulties I guess is that if you are not directly accountable to people, you don't do what needs to be done for them. Whether it was the passout report in the 50's, reports on D.C. schools in the 30's, we have always had these difficulties. And to expect people to remedy it within 3 years or 5 years now is not reasonable.

In addition, if you look nationally, we just got a statement from the New York Times that New York City schools have not been inspected and will be subjected to the fire code, which means we're going to see in another major city the kind of problem that we had with our school buildings afflicting New York.

Mr. DAVIS. You may not have the same kind of judges up there, though, that you had here.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. But we will still have the same qualitative deterioration of school buildings, which needs a national funding base. We are aware that you want to see things happen quickly. But there is no big city school system with a heavily poor and minority population that is moving rapidly to raise student achievement quickly. It is a long-term process. We feel very confident that the work of the National Commission on Education and the Economy, which is helping us understand the kinds of things that we need to do better to keep us from being as insular as Washington has been, will be more effective.

Mr. DAVIS. You just used the word "poor and minority." They are not interchangeable. It really is the poor population. Your child is a great example of how a kid can come through the system and get national merit approval and then go on to an Ivy League school. It is really the poverty, isn't it, more than ethnicity?

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. Unfortunately, in our country they tend to be intertwined. I'm saying in our city in which 65 percent of the

children are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, in which our level of low income children is so high, that we can't even service most of the schools. As the Federal Government, for example, established chapter 1, every school system gets some chapter 1 funding. In the District of Columbia if your school is not at 74 percent chapter 1 eligible students, you don't get the money. In Fairfax County, I think it's somewhere under 10 percent. In Montgomery County, it is somewhere around 20 percent. The level of additional support our children need in order to have access to services is well beyond the level of funding our school system receives. And so we are doing the best we can with the resources given to us. We will be doing far better with the work of the National Commission on Education and the Economy, but a serious look by the Congress at the kinds of supplements and supports that are needed for the District of Columbia I think would be very helpful to us.

Mr. DAVIS. I don't disagree. You talked about how the school system has always had its shortcomings but never the shortcomings that it has had in very recent history. In the old days, at least you would have Members of Congress send their kids to the public school system. I don't think there is one Member now who does that. There are a variety of reasons for that. One reason is that more Members live away from the District. But District schools have hit rock bottom. We think District schools are on the way up, as has been indicated. We want to accelerate this improvement and understand what we need to do about it.

I think you and Ms. Berlin hit it on the nose. We have to have the parents buy into the program and be stakeholders in this and have input or it is going to continue to go down. General Becton admitted to that, when he made his statement, that this is something we need to work on.

Let me go to Ms. Berlin and then I can go with you, Ms. Harvey.

Ms. BERLIN. I agree with Delabian that raising test scores and achievement levels for children, it takes time. But where you can find areas of improvement that can happen in a much more briefer period of time is the area of operations. Chicago is an example of that. We really need—in order for our schools to work, we really need to get the operations side together.

For example, personnel, as the Washington Post aptly reported, that system is a mess. I think that's where you can find and have a great impact more quickly. The local schools feel that tremendously, because they cannot get teachers in the local schools quickly, and teachers leave because they're not getting paid on time, and what they should be paid. So there are areas in the school system that I think can be addressed, and I'd say within a year you should be able to see a difference and great improvement.

But again test scores, they are a really knotty issue. I know in Chicago in the research that was done there, schools they counted that made great improvements over a period of 3 years were those that test scores were raised above 10 percent.

Mr. DAVIS. Ms. Harvey, any additional comments from you?

Ms. HARVEY. Yes, I'm glad that Marlene mentioned Chicago. I was the chief accountability officer in Chicago. I want to go back to your statement about being impatient. I don't think we need to lose that. I think all of us need to be impatient with results for our

kids. But I also think that we need to organize and support schools a little bit differently. This is a massive job. We are all very important in that process.

But one of the things that is most important is for us to organize, to allow the leadership of this district to do the work. Poverty is not a reason for lack of achievement. If that were true, not only would Delabian's children not be where they were, but I wouldn't be sitting here. I rather suspect that many people around this table would not be where we are. We can go in every one of the dysfunctional schools in this district, and in districts all over the country, and you can find kids who achieve every time—every year, teachers who are working with the same poor kids, the same kids of color, the same kids who speak—their first language is other than English—and year after year after year they're able to get them up to standards. So it's what we do that is important with kids. Not that money is not important, but we certainly have to do more with the money that we have.

Operations. If I could make a suggestion to the D.C. schools, and I know this is top on their agenda, is that every operation within the District to be aligned toward and with achievement. What does the classroom teacher and the student need? That includes the operations. I heard, I'm sorry, I don't remember which one, say that in summer school, what do we need to have? We need to have the buildings open, make sure the climate—I think it was Marlene—that the climate is right for learning. Everything relates to academic achievement.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me ask just a final question across the board. What is everyone's view of the current status of safety and security conditions in the school versus your expectations and where we were 2 years ago?

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. Parents are very concerned about security. Parents, particularly at the high school level, are meeting. One of their major concerns is how to improve security in schools.

Mr. DAVIS. Is it better than 2 years ago?

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. That is not possible to say. Because we have never felt that what was reported was an accurate reflection of what was happening. Every time a child is killed, you become more aware of the nature of the problem. But you don't know what was happening, whether there were weapons problems, fights, et cetera, and what the extent of that was. So I can say that we are more aware of our need to deal with school security than we were in the past simply because we have had fatalities. But I can't tell you that it is worse. We're not experts in this area. We are constantly looking to the school system to have relationships with the police department so that children are better monitored in the period coming to school and going home from school. Many kids say that that walk is something that they really dread, because, whether it's gangs or neighborhood animosities or whatever. That's not something I can speak to directly. It's something that is going to take a whole system, city effort, with conflict resolution, with police protection, with everything.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you.

I think what you are saying is in the past they didn't even keep the records, and, in fact, they suppressed reporting of these issues,

which makes it hard to measure objectively. I just wondered if at least anecdotally you could give me a feel. I think you answered it as fully as you can. Ms. Berlin.

Ms. BERLIN. One comment that I would like to make that I think people overlook is that security guards in schools are really a very important element in schools. It is very important that those guards be stable in the schools so they get to know the children and they know when issues arise. To have roving security guards, in my opinion, is not the best use of security in schools. And I just see that—my daughter's in junior high school and they know the security guard is there. And they are a part of the community and that's an important element to consider.

Mr. DAVIS. OK. Ms. Harvey, do you have any comment?

Ms. HARVEY. Well——

Mr. DAVIS. Have you seen this nationally?

Ms. HARVEY. Yes. Nationally, I think that the records would show that inside of schools, schools are getting safer. It is the corridor leading to schools that we have to deal with. And that is why it is very important to make sure that we have good strong relationships with the city police department. We began new programs like using parents to help make that corridor safer for kids. I can tell you it really changes the things when kids know that parents in the neighborhood are out there, and they can make sure that they are going to be able to get that block and a half to get into the building.

But this is—this is a problem that we just can't minimize. We have got to keep atop on our agenda, because before education, parents want their kids to be safe. So it is just going to take all of us constantly measuring this and see if we are doing—the initiatives are working, and looking at our neighboring cities and trying to emulate what's working.

Mr. DAVIS. We have had our own problems in the suburbs as well.

Ms. HARVEY. Yes, absolutely.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you all very much.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. Mr. Davis, may I make a request of you. As you look at our school system's budget, I would hope that you will force parents to help us get school—individual school budgets, so that parents can do a better job of understanding what's going on in their child's individual school. We know that the overall school system budget needs to be flushed out, et cetera, but what we also need to see is what's going on in individual schools. And I think to some level outside recommendations that budgets be submitted in that way might be helpful for us.

Mr. DAVIS. All right, I guess we can become involved in terms of having them submitted, and that way—obviously you wouldn't want us to tinker with what schools got what money.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. No, just to make sure that those schools are developed.

Mr. DAVIS. OK, thank you very much. I am going to yield 10 minutes to Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Yes, it is important to know the notion of going to school-based budgeting would be important. And it is going to be important to

translate it, too. The schools aren't going to have the same budgets and they are vastly different circumstances in these schools. And this translation is going to be just as important as putting it out there, because it can result in a great deal of polarization.

People go down these numbers, and find that school X has this and school Y has this number and school Z has that. So I don't think that is the answer to the—I don't think that is the answer to all of our—in this city one problem begets another. And I guess my main problem is that we don't always anticipate that that is the nature of life, that you've got to prepare for the next problem because it's going to come out of the next solution.

I want to acknowledge that a member of the school board, Mr. Benjamin Bottom, school board member from ward 6, has come, and welcome him to this hearing. I want to thank you, Ms. Harvey, for the work with our school system. And I want to thank the two parents here for the extremely hard work they do with our public schools. Not only with the schools involving their own children, it is the kind of parent involvement that is exemplary in the city.

I want to thank you both for that hard analytical work you do and all of the attention you played in the school system. Ms. Rice-Thurston, you, of course, have become a preeminent expert in the D.C. public schools, because of the work of—unceasing work of Parents United. And we are very grateful for that as well.

I think I see some difference in the way—and a small difference, but a difference in, at least in the testimony, in the approaches. Ms. Rice-Thurston captures much of what many of us have regarded as a major failure of the school system, its plans, its processes. Ms. Berlin talks about process.

Well, as I said in my own opening statement, I don't think you can do anything without a plan, because you don't know if you have done anything without a plan. But D.C. has had plans, plans that have accountability targets and plans that you use to, in fact, do reform. It is plans you go back and say, yeah, we did that; we will change this because we found we shouldn't do it this way.

Your point, Ms. Rice-Thurston, I remember coming forward forcefully when the Congress, what is it, a couple years ago, was involved in the legislation. We didn't know what the Congress was going to do. We finally got a good bill out of here, because it was charter schools and the rest, rather than what we thought might come out.

But we have over—we had to overcome all kinds of citizens and elected officials. And everybody was of the view that this was the most process-oriented plan, oriented jurisdiction they had ever seen. And nothing ever came out in the end, and people essentially would sit down and do their plans and they go home. It is as if the act of formulating a plan is the functional equivalent of accomplishing it.

So that when I stress the need for plan, I am not talking about the kind of plans that were so under discussion 2 years ago, the plans don't come off the paper, the plans that ought to be written in somebody's wonderful book, but the kinds of plans frankly that we are beginning to see actualized now.

I need to know—Ms. Berlin, you speak about process, and I want to know what you mean by process. Because you say—you talk

about it in your testimony, about a discussion on budget. And you said it was clear from the discussion that you all had, apparently with the chief financial officer, that the process—the discussion—from the discussion and the process there was a definite discrepancy between where the community wanted to go with school reform and where the school administration was going.

First of all, I want to know what community you are speaking of exactly. I want to know—let me finish my question. I want to know what, quote, community you are speaking of. And then I want to know what—where this school—where you perceive that the school administration wants to go that is different from where the, quote, community wants to go.

Ms. BERLIN. The community that was—it was members that were represented in Tony Williams' office.

Ms. NORTON. Would you tell me who they are, so I know when you say these people are going at odds with the community, I would like you to define whom you mean by the community.

Ms. BERLIN. Well, there were a number of representatives and there are about 20 of us, and I don't know all their names. I am sure that Tony——

Ms. NORTON. I am not asking for the names. Are they—are they from various organizations? Are they members of the elected school board? Are they——

Ms. BERLIN. OK, they are citizens.

Ms. NORTON. I am sure they are that.

Ms. BERLIN. There was people who were interested—from special education. There was a fellow from Anacostia. There are people that I didn't even—you know, that I didn't know. All I can say is that——

Ms. NORTON. I just want to caution you, Ms. Berlin, because we have been subject up here to my mouth and everybody else who have come to tell us they were for the community and what the community wanted from education, and we discount that, at least in the Congress.

And when you made a strong statement, as you have in your testimony, that, one, you tell us that there is a definite discrepancy between where the community wanted to go, and then you tell us there was this one from Anacostia and whatever, so I can't—and then you tell us where the administration is going. I didn't even know from here where the administration was going. You told me where you wanted to go, but this paragraph doesn't tell me where the administration is going so that I can evaluate where this is—where they are going and see where the discrepancy really is.

Ms. BERLIN. OK. Well, where they are going is reflected in their plan, and in their plan there is really nothing that reflects a focus on prekindergarten or vocational education, and those were two areas that we focused on.

The other area in the plan that is mentioned, though it's unclear where it's going, is on decentralization of the school system. And from the discussion in the group in Anthony Williams' office, it was clear that people were very concerned about schools getting more local control of their resources. And we——

Ms. NORTON. What does it mean, more schools to get more local control of their resources?

Ms. BERLIN. Staffing decisions, budgetary decisions, that is why we put a—in the process, we put money in for an equivalent of one FTE for schools, to decide how that would be used——

Ms. NORTON. Well, I think——

Ms. BERLIN [continuing]. To give them more discretionary——

Ms. NORTON. I think you have the makings of a good suggestion here, but I don't see that it was in place in your criticism. I think it would in fact behoove the trustees and the elected school board to get a representative group that might in fact give them, in a hearing, some systematic input into these discussions. I want to state for the record my strong objection to the school system responding to ad hoc groups who decide—who purport to decide where the community is on funding decisions or anything else.

I have—I have seen the—anyone who saw this school system over the last 20 years saw it ripped apart, not suggesting this very responsible group would do that. I am not going to apply any different standard here than I applied in the 1970's and 1980's when they came forward and told us what the school system would do and took over the school board meetings, and people often responded to them.

What the school system needs to do is to get in touch with their elected school board so that they can be orderly, a way to hear from every ward and from every segment of the community, so that in fact there can be greater confidence of the kind Ms. Berlin does not now have. I think, because there is the absence of that, and in the absence of that, she has done what a responsible parent would do, which is say let us all go in and at least express our views.

We need to have a more systematic and organized way to do that, so that—and the people who—who the people have elected are sitting there dormant, might be given something to do if there were hearings regarding the academic plan; if there were hearings regarding the budget, and then people from the ward seeing their own school board member. You see your school board member from ward 6, your school board member from ward 4, you are more likely to come in and give your views, and when you hear all of those views, you can begin to make decisions as to whether or not the school system's priorities, in fact, are the priorities of the community.

Now, see, I am concerned here. The group wanted to find a mechanism to give local schools more discretionary resources. This came in the form of providing to the schools the equivalent of one FTE to utilize how they so desire. Then it says money was taken out of summer school and other areas to fund these priorities. Does that mean that was your recommendation?

Ms. BERLIN. Right. Not all money was taken out of summer school.

Ms. NORTON. But it makes my point. It really makes my point.

Ms. BERLIN. One of the issues that we discussed in that budget session was that if in the next year the improvements in the curriculum occurred, there would be less of a need for summer school. Now, this was not a perfect process. And this was not—it was a process for Anthony Williams, I believe, to get a sense of what community members thought was important.

But these are also issues I feel need to be reconciled through some kind of problem process, whether it's through the elected board or through a citizens' process, to sit down with members of the school system to really look at the priorities of the plan. I mean we do have a pre-K program that is known nationally in this Nation, and to build on it, and to give our children the benefit of all children being in prekindergarten, it is really important, given where we are in our academic achievement.

Ms. NORTON. Ms. Berlin, I commend you for, in fact, coming forward with those ideas. And I think it might even make a lot of sense to have parents especially to encourage—in order to encourage parents for greater involvement, it might make a lot of sense to have parents in an organized way involved in just these kinds of matters. I am making another point, and that is, it really goes to how the elected school board and the trustees organize how they receive recommendations.

I mean, they are going to be beholden to whoever comes forward, unless there is a more systematic process. Now, you have here a very responsible group, the Ad Hoc Parents Coalition, which sits down and studies what it wants to do. I disagree with what she had to say about summer school. She is right that if, in fact, there is—the teachers have a better curriculum, you won't need the summer school. But the fact is that summer school, you need the summer school this summer.

Ms. BERLIN. I am not talking about this summer, I am talking about the following.

Ms. NORTON. The point is, the point—I don't even know whether some money should be taken out of summer school. Please understand my underlying point. I have absolutely no idea. I defer entirely to those of you who do. But I am saying that the notion of taking—that they are having to put together a summer school this year without one bit of help from the Congress, and at a time when nothing was in the budget to do that. It seems to me that is one of the things you would want to give them their head on, because they know in order to be successful in the summer school they have got to have the lowest per pupil ratio, and they have got to look at the whole system.

They also know if they fail in the summer school, that—which is a short-term way to measure their success or failure—they are going to hear from everybody in the city. So, I mean, that is why I want to stress that you may be right and they may be right. But we are not going to have a way to know that the best judgment has been made and the best discretion has been exercised until we make greater use of the people who we have elected, and who are elected for the first time and never got an opportunity to do anything. In a real sense, these parents have come forward because there has been no other way——

Ms. BERLIN. Very correct.

Ms. NORTON [continuing]. For parents to have input into the system. And so absent a systematic input from your elected school board and such representative groups as they call forward, you are going to have activist parents doing what I commend them for doing, and not simply giving up and saying there is no—you know, there is no way to be involved by coming forward. The school sys-

tem, I am asking you to take note, and when you hear criticism, and there have been some criticisms of the school system, these parents' criticisms, I say you deserve the criticisms you get because you haven't set up a better system for receiving criticism.

I want to ask Ms. Rice-Thurston a question about the condition of the repairs in the schools. I mean, many of us were heartbroken frankly to see the collapse of the system that was put in place. Ms. Berlin is talking about her system wasn't perfect. This system wasn't perfect either, but I tell you what we are left with; we are left with the officers who were carrying out the work and without the monitor who was doing the work. And I like your evaluation of where that leaves us and what you think should be done so we don't fall back into the situation from whence we have just begun to come.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. We spoke with Don Brown, who resigned as monitor last night, as a matter of fact. He gave us real confidence that the school system has a strategy for making building repairs in a timely manner. But he also told us that they need a monitor who is paid, who is full-time, to do this work. And we have sent a letter to the Control Board asking for their efforts to speedily replace Mr. Brown. The Control Board is the person—is the entity responsible for hiring this monitor or making this monitor—giving it the credence, I guess, that the lawsuit required in the settlement.

And we simply have to pursue this with them. I was very surprised at how confident he was about his relationship with General Williams, that he had attended all the meetings that he felt he needed to attend, and that they were working. I am not a builder at all, so I can't gainsay anything that he expressed. So I was very pleased to know that that was his relationship. And we will be trying to make sure that we get a replacement for him in the near future.

Ms. NORTON. It's interesting, I have spoken to Mr. Brown, and he didn't mention to me a paid monitor. And, of course, if that needs to be, it needs to be, and we will have to do what we have to do. And I will say in a city full of the best qualified people in the country, people who have deep government services, I would be ashamed if there were not resources in the city that would not require us to pay.

I am—if the school system desires, I am prepared to ask the GSA to give us help in monitoring, because—and I believe that we could get some help, because the GSA, and I am on their oversight committee, has been quick to respond to our requests for help. And they, of course, have the kinds of experience that is absolutely on point here.

The only thing is that the city is full of private parties like Don Brown, and everywhere I go in the city, people say, "I wish somebody would ask me to do something in the city." It is really our fault for not finding ways to use some of the top talent in the country, because they live here.

So I just hope that we don't get to the point where we have to pay a monitor. I agree with Ms. Rice-Thurston, we have got—if we have got to do that, we have got to do it, because we have got to keep this system in place. But I can tell you there are Don Browns in this city who would donate their time. And there is the GSA and

there is the OMB and the whole Federal Government, which is greatly underutilized in the reform of the D.C. government.

So I am pleased to work with you and with the school officials to see if we can fill this extraordinary hole left by a man whom I know well and who's a success in this very field, is unequaled in this town. So it has been a great loss to us.

Ms. RICE-THURSTON. That is what we told him.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Ms. HARVEY. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. Yes, please.

Ms. HARVEY. I would like to go back to parental involvement, if I could, for a second. I think we would be remiss if we didn't commend the District of Columbia on what they are doing in this area. Over the last couple of months, there have been at least five or six major, major parent involvement meetings. I have been at meetings that the District has conducted with over 600 parents attending to get information about the new promotion policy, the Stanford 9, the most urgent issues. I know, the District has pulled together all of its senior staff and the National Center, working with them to put together a better communications process.

In addition to that, this year, in fact in the next few months the District is going to have customer satisfaction surveys that go out to all parents, and along with some other stakeholders, so they can get the issues about how they feel about their schools and fold that into—into the plan. And there are a number of focus groups that are about to take place. So I think the District is recognizing that they need much, much more parental involvement and that it has to be better organized.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much. Good point. The record is open for the next few days if you want to submit anything else. Thank you very much.

We are going to switch panels now and call our second panel to testify, which will consist of D.C. Council Member Kathy Patterson, a member of the Education Committee designated by the Council Chair to testify; Dr. Joyce Ladner, a member of the Control Board; and Dr. Bruce MacLaury, the chairman of the District of Columbia Public Schools Emergency Board of Trustees.

You know it is the policy of this committee to have all witnesses be sworn before they may testify. Please rise with me and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. DAVIS. Please be seated, and by unanimous consent, any written statements will be made a part of the permanent record. Try to limit your oral statements to 5 minutes. As you start the 5th minute, the orange light will light up, so try to sum up your remaining points. Then we will proceed to questions. I will begin with Council Member Patterson, followed by Dr. Ladner and then Dr. MacLaury.

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STATEMENTS OF KATHLEEN PATTERSON, COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA; JOYCE LADNER, MEMBER, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY; AND BRUCE MacLAURY, CHAIRMAN, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS EMERGENCY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Ms. PATTERSON. Thank you very much. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today to testify on behalf of the Council and its chairman, Linda Cropp. I have served for 3 years as a member of the Council Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation, and I currently chair our Committee on Government Operations. I am, as well, a D.C. public school parent, and my views are informed by my own experiences.

I would like to provide some context for my testimony on the D.C. public schools' academic plan. In 1996, when the Control Board issued its critical report on D.C. schools, one number that jumped off the page was the statistic that said we are failing nearly 80 percent of our children and failing them by the fourth grade. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, fully 78 percent of fourth graders tested below basic in reading.

There are comparable figures, however, for other cities. In Baltimore, 74 percent of fourth graders tested below basic in reading; in Boston 70 percent; in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, 73 percent; in California cities, 79 percent; in Connecticut cities, 78 percent. In New Orleans and Baton Rouge, 79 percent of the children tested below basic in reading in the fourth grade. The District of Columbia clearly is not alone among urban school systems in failing children today.

In the recent report "Quality Counts 98, The Urban Challenge," Professor Martin Haberman of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee notes, "There are no model urban school systems." The report itself adds, "Every city has its lighthouse schools, where poor and minority children achieve at high levels. But such excellence rarely transcends individual schools. No city has been able to reproduce that success on a large scale."

A request I would make to you, Mr. Davis, and to your colleagues, as you go about the business of the constitutionally required oversight of Washington, DC, please also keep in mind your role as national policymakers. One way to protect and assist children here is to protect and assist children across the country, through family preservation programs and safe streets programs as well as ongoing support for Head Start and Title I, all of which benefit District children and other children living in urban centers.

While there may not be a model urban system, we do have excellent individual schools and extensive research, and that information must inform the academic planning here in Washington, DC. Our academic plan should include universal prekindergarten. This point was already made by the previous panel. Today we serve only half of this the city's 4-year-olds. We should expand Head Start and preschool for 3-year-olds.

Both Georgia and Ohio have adopted goals of universal preschool in their State education goals. Such policies help all children, but they are especially critical for children living in poverty and the

District, like other cities, has an exceptionally high proportion of children living in poverty.

Small classes are also important, particularly in the early years. We have gone in the wrong direction here in the District. Two years ago, to meet a midyear budget shortfall, the school system increased class size, and the new leadership to date has not, to date, revisited that unfortunate decision. The STAR project in Kentucky and subsequent evidence elsewhere has demonstrated the advantages of smaller elementary classes, especially when it comes to teaching reading.

Our plan should also call for small schools to help create a supportive environment for children, one where children and their families are known and feel connected. In the absence of an academic plan setting small schools as a goal, the school system last year made facilities decisions that put more children into larger schools.

Nearly everyone agrees that no element in education is more important than the teacher. It's surprising, then, how little support individual teachers receive, from rookies struggling to maintain order to veterans unable to reach a particular child. In the elementary school my children have attended, I've seen older teachers mentoring younger teachers, on their own, out of their own desire and commitment. Our teachers need not only traditional professional development but instructional support in the classroom.

At the Oyster Bilingual School here, and Ms. Ackerman can testify on this point, teachers started the teacher network where they meet regularly to help each other develop strategies to deal with specific classroom problems. Our long-term academic plan should emphasize such techniques to improve teaching because, ultimately, it is only by improving teaching that we improve learning.

One concern I have had regarding the academic plan is that it has not, to date, driven everything else in D.C. schools. I hope and I believe that that is changing. All other support services in our school system should support children and education. Ms. Harvey also made this point. When a kindergarten teacher has to take a day away from his students to help the certification office recreate personnel files they have lost, we have things backward. The personnel operation, like facilities and procurement and finances, should support what is happening in the classroom. I continue to believe that school support operations here can be reformed; Chicago schools have set the example in this area. Measurable academic improvement, though, takes more time.

We must be careful to set realistic, attainable educational goals. A one-size-fits-all approach most likely will not work. In other words, the improvements we can reasonably expect to attain may differ between English speakers and non-English speakers, between special ed and non-special ed. We need to be cognizant of this.

This is another arena in which you, Mr. Davis and Congresswoman Norton, can help D.C. schools. There is extraordinary pressure on the school system today to set the bar very high, pressure from those outside the system, like the Congress, who are understandably impatient and even angry with the outcomes of our school system. But setting those expectations is a very tricky busi-

ness. Our standards for public schools and for our children have been too low, no doubt. High standards are important to communicate to school children our belief in and our commitment to their performance. But the danger of unrealistic expectations is also failure.

In my view, we will be successful if by the year 2000 we have a strong academic plan with high standards, a curriculum aligned to those standards, textbooks and materials that support the curriculum and, most important, we have all of our teachers trained and teaching effectively to those high standards.

David Hornbeck, former Maryland education secretary, now superintendent in Philadelphia, was quoted in Education Week saying, "No one these days expects that a single leader can ride in on a white horse and rescue an embattled urban district. The fundamental and wrenching changes required to bring the vast majority of city students to high standards will require long term, concerted efforts from many people: parents, teachers, principals, politicians, community groups, public agencies, businesses and religious leaders." As both a parent and a politician, I concur.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today, and I would be happy to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Patterson follows:]

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to testify on behalf of the D.C. Council and its Chairman, Linda A. Cropp. I have served for three years as a member of the Council's Committee on Education, Libraries and Recreation, and I currently am chairman of our Committee on Government Operations. I am, as well, a D.C. Public School parent and my views are informed by my own experiences.

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The District of Columbia clearly is not alone among urban school systems in failing children today. In the recent *Quality Counts 98 Report, The Urban Challenge*, Professor Martin Haberman of the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee notes, "There are no model urban school systems." The report adds: "Every city has its lighthouse schools, where poor and minority children achieve at high levels. But such excellence rarely transcends individual schools. ...No city has been able to reproduce that success on a large scale."

Our school system is also not alone in having been "taken over" through receivership or other action. It is one of ten, including Baltimore in 1997, Chicago, Cleveland and Newark in 1995, and East St. Louis in 1994.

A request to you, Mr. Davis, and to your colleagues: as you go about the business of the Constitutionally-required oversight of Washington DC, please also keep in mind your role as *national* policymakers. One way to protect and assist children here is to protect and assist children across the country, through family preservation programs and safe streets programs as well as ongoing support for Head Start and Title I, all of which benefit District children and other children living in urban centers.

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for the D.C. Public Schools. Our academic plan should include universal pre-kindergarten. Today we serve only half of the city's 4-year-olds. We should expand Head Start and pre-school for 3-year olds. Both Georgia and Ohio have adopted goals of universal preschool. Such policies help all children but they are especially critical for children living in poverty and the District, like other cities, has an exceptionally high proportion of children living in poverty.

Small classes are important, particularly in the early years. We have gone in the wrong direction here in the District. Two years ago, to meet a mid-year budget shortfall, the school system increased class size, and the new leadership has not, to date, revisited that ill-chosen decision. The STAR project in Kentucky and subsequeht evidence elsewhere demonstrate the advantages of smaller elementary classes, especially in teaching reading.

Our plan should also call for small schools to help create a more supportive environment for children, one where children and their families are known and feel connected. In the absence of an academic plan setting small schools as a goal, the school system last year made facilities decisions that put more children into much larger schools.

Nearly everyone agrees that no element in education is more important than the teacher. It's surprising, then, how very little suport individual teachers receive, from rookies struggling to maintain order in their classes to veterans unable to reach a particular child. In the elementary school my children have attended I have seen older teachers mentoring younger teachers -- on their own, out of their own desire and commitment. Our teachers need not only traditional professional development but instructional support in the classroom. Some districts, like District 2 in New York City and San Antonio, have had success with "resident" or "master" teachers who work with classroom teachers on effective practices.

At the Oyster Bilingual School here -- and Ms. Ackerman can testify on this point -- teachers started a teacher network where they meet regularly to help each other develop strategies to deal with specific classroom problems. Our long-term academic plan should emphasize such techniques to improve teaching because, ultimately, it is only by improving teaching that we will improve learning.

One concern I have regarding the academic plan is that it has not, to date, driven everything else in D.C. schools. I hope, and believe, that that is changing. All other support services in our school system should support children and education. When a kindergarten teacher has to take a day away from his students to help the certification office recreate personnel files they have lost, we have things backward. The personnel

operation, like facilities and procurement and finances -- should support what is happening in the classroom. I continue to believe that school support operations here can be reformed; Chicago schools have set an example here. Measurable academic improvement, however, takes more time.

We must be careful to set realistic, attainable educational goals. A one-size-fits-all approach most likely will not work. In other words, the improvements we can reasonably expect to attain may differ between English speakers and non-English speakers, between special ed and non-special ed students, and between younger children and students who have been in the system for many years.

National Public Radio has run a fascinating series called *Grey Matters* on how the brain works and how children learn. This medical research suggests that the window of opportunity for learning a skill like reading starts to close at the age of 10. It is more difficult to teach a child of 13 to read than a child of 10. It may be, then, that as we set expectations we can set a higher "bar" for our younger children.

This is another arena in which you, Mr. Davis and Congresswoman Norton, can help D.C. schools. There is extraordinary pressure on DCPS to set the bar very high today -- pressure from those outside the system, like the U.S. Congress, who are understandably impatient and even angry with the outcomes of this school system. Setting expectations is a tricky business. Our standards for public schools and our children have been too low. High standards are important to communicate to children our belief in and our commitment to their performance. But the danger of unrealistic expectations is, also, failure.

In my view, we will be successful if, by the year 2000, we have a strong academic plan with high standards, a curriculum aligned to those standards, textbooks and materials that support the curriculum and -- most importantly -- we have all of our teachers trained and teaching, effectively, to those high standards.

David Hornbeck, former Maryland education secretary and now superintendent in Philadelphia, was quoted in *Education Week* saying, "No one these days expects that a single leader can ride in on a white horse and rescue an embattled urban district. The fundamental and wrenching changes required to bring the vast majority of city students to high standards will require long term, concerted efforts from many people: parents, teachers, principals, politicians, community groups, public agencies, businesses, and religious leaders." As a parent and a politician, I concur.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Mr. DAVIS. Kathy, thank you.

Ms. Ladner.

Ms. LADNER. Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman Norton, I want to thank this committee for the opportunity to speak to you today. I am the member of the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility Management Assistance Authority with the lead responsibility for public education in the district. I should also state that I am a former D.C. school parent. My son is now in college.

To achieve our educational goals, the D.C. public schools recruited Ms. Arlene Ackerman as the deputy superintendent/chief academic officer. When she was recruited, it was essential to the success of the reform efforts that we recruit—that we hire a top flight academic officer who also had leadership skills, hands-on experience and the expertise to lead and to manage the D.C. public schools. It was important that all the candidates have the necessary skills to serve as CEO, superintendent. That was something that we looked for very precisely.

After conducting an exhaustive nationwide search, the trustees and General Becton, in consultation with the authority, selected Ms. Ackerman. I should also say that Ms. Ackerman was being wooed heavily by the Cambridge, MA, public school system, and it was only because we offered a much more attractive set of conditions to her, were we able to woo her away from a job where she had in fact been offered the superintendency.

Ms. Ackerman has a wealth of experience and commitment to educational reform. All of the systems—and she is making sure, since she has taken over, that all of the systems within the school are to be driven by the educational priorities. I must say in the very beginning that was not the case, because when General Becton and his team first came in some 16, 17 months ago, they essentially had to come in to put out fires, in terms of safety and in terms of 14,000 or so, I believe, fire code violations, complaints about everything from food to leaky roofs.

But having recruited Ms. Ackerman, and many have complained that it took so long, I must simply state for the record here that when national searches are conducted, I have conducted a lot of them myself as a former chief academic officer for our university, that the search firms take a long time, the entire process takes a long time.

And I dare say that we would not have gotten the top flight—top high caliber person as we've gotten if we had been able to woo someone away from another school district in the middle of the school year. Good people don't come easily that way. But she is an outstanding educator and administrator. She's served as a teacher, a principal, central administrator.

And before coming here, she was deputy superintendent for the Seattle, WA, school district where she had the responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the entire system. In Seattle, she was responsible also for the academic achievement as well as Districtwide educational support services, for the record. I have attached a copy of Ms. Ackerman's résumé to this testimony, so that you are able to peruse it.

On March 27, 1998, General Becton announced his decision to resign his post as CEO/superintendent. On the next day, March 28th,

the Authority, after consulting with the trustees and with General Becton, appointed Ms. Arlene Ackerman to serve as the chief—next chief executive officer and superintendent.

We moved hastily, members of the committee, because we felt that the school system, the embattled system could not afford to have any more time than absolutely necessary, to have a vacuum created. Moreover, when Ms. Ackerman was recruited, as I stated earlier, it was with the intention that she would ascend to the superintendency, chief executive officer's position. The Authority appointed her to this position because we are very, very confident that under her leadership the management and the educational reform efforts will be continued without interruption.

Under her plans that she intends to implement, she will increase the accountability for educational change throughout the system. She has already begun this by holding principals more accountable, that 50 percent of their rating comes through the achievement of the students. Under General Becton and Ms. Ackerman, the principals' appointments have been reduced to 1 year, and they've removed the previous politicization from the process.

The public schools are also moving to make teacher evaluations performance-driven. Principals and teachers are receiving training in the expectations supporting performance-based management. Higher academic standards are being instituted.

When I testified here last, I stated that Ms. Ackerman has implemented biannual testing using the Stanford Achievement Test Series Ninth Edition. And this will help us, No. 1, in October establish baseline data, and in the spring test and measure against that.

I have included in my testimony for the record the abysmal record that we—the standards—sorry, achievement levels of our children, but I dare say that I am cautiously optimistic that in the spring those will have improved. Social promotion has been abolished, and in order to—once it's abolished, then we have to prepare, what do we do with the children? We expect between 15,000 and 20,000 students to be in summer school.

Much has been said by parents and others about the lack of air conditioning and, members of the committee, I'd like to simply say here that I grew up in a little community outside of Hattiesburg, MI, called Palmer's Crossing, and we barely had a roof over our heads in the school itself. Needless to say, in the heat of the summer in Mississippi, we had no air conditioning, and yet we learned.

Last week when President Clinton was in South Africa they showed on television a school in one of the homeland territories where there were 800 students, 10 teachers, and they had no building. They all sat with slates, if they could afford them, underneath the trees and they learned.

I think that our position on this is that we're—that the parents are wagging the dog, that our children have not complained about the environment, and the fact is that we can't do very much about it anyway. So why complain and make that an issue when, in fact, the main thing is that we're trying to bring these children's literacy level up?

As the schools continue to refine the educational plans, to identify the critical actions and timeframes for addressing these problems, we expect that it will be driven by the educational plan. Un-

fortunately, in less than 9 months Ms. Ackerman has not had the time to shift the entire paradigm toward the educational plan yet, but all of the making—all of the processes are in motion now so that that does become the case.

I want to say just a word in closing, Mr. Chairman and Congresswoman Norton, something about Ms. Ackerman the person. We have talked, extolled her virtues often as an educator and leader, but I've gotten to know her very, very well as a person. And I must say that the first thing—point I want to make is she cannot succeed alone. We are a very, very touch—this is a very, very tough town. We're very critical of all of our leaders, and I do not want to be a part of a group that would be ultimately responsible for bringing down a superintendent/chief executive officer.

I think that we are lucky, quite frankly, to get her to come here. And I believe that we can be constructively—we can make constructive criticism, but unless this community bands together and organizes to support the specialists—they are the ones who have the capability, they're the ones who have studied education. I don't—I as a parent/citizen do not know public school education. I think parents and citizens can be very helpful in trying to engage themselves in whatever ways in the process they can be helpful, but we must leave the leading of the educational content to the educators.

I also want to say that Ms. Ackerman's tenacity, her temperament, her intelligence and her long, long hard hours that she puts in working until 1 a.m., on Saturday night or Sunday morning in the shop to make sure that she's got the right personnel in place, and her long-suffering assistant—I shouldn't call her, but hard-working assistant, Ms. Louise Brooks. These are two of the hardest working people I have ever gotten to know.

And I—we hear a lot of people say that they're in this for the children. We hear parents say it. We hear educators. We hear volunteers. We hear senior citizens say that all we care about is the children, but I do believe that this is the case with her. I think she wants to succeed as a professional person, but I also have not met such a dedicated but empathic person, who has tremendous empathy with the plight of children who do not get the education. She's tough. She's no-nonsense. But she's also warm, friendly, and engaging.

And I would say she is what this community needs at this time, in terms of being able to make the transition from the crisis management; that we are grateful to General Becton for having come in and turned around a system so that it would be able to receive a Ms. Ackerman. And I, Mr. Chairman, want to say that all of us need to put our personal concerns behind and unite around the leadership of the schools so that we can indeed make them the model for the Nation. I thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ladner follows:]

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Dr. Joyce Ladner, Member of the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority ("Authority"). I am the Board Member with lead responsibility for public education in the District of Columbia. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the progress made by the Authority and the D.C. Public Schools to improve the quality of education in the District of Columbia.

Introduction

The Authority was created by the U.S. Congress in 1995 to return the District of Columbia to financial solvency and to improve the management and delivery of public services. As the Authority has reported to Congress previously, there has been considerable progress made in revitalizing the District Government and improving the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Mr. Chairman, the Authority has devoted much time and attention to improving the condition of public education in the Nation's capital. When confronted with the failure of the District's educational system, the Authority took action. In our November, 1996 report, "Children In Crisis: A Report on the Failure of the D.C. Public Schools," the Authority concluded that the deplorable record of the District's public schools, in every important educational and management area, had left the system in crisis. In virtually every area, and for every grade level, the system failed to provide the District's children with a quality education and a safe environment in which to learn.

The Authority's Mandate for Change

In response to this crisis, the Authority, on November 15, 1996, took immediate action to fundamentally improve the schools. Through a Resolution and Order, the Authority replaced the Superintendent and reduced the powers of the elected Board of Education. In their place, the Authority appointed retired Army Lieutenant General Julius W. Becton, Jr. as Chief Executive Officer and Superintendent, and established an Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees ("Trustees"), under the leadership of Chairman Bruce K. MacLaury. The Trustees are volunteers. As part of the overhaul, the Authority ordered the Chief Executive Officer ("CEO")/ Superintendent to address the structure, education, and management of the public schools. The Authority established an aggressive agenda of reform. Together with the CEO/Superintendent and the Trustees, we have worked to ensure that the education of our children will improve.

Progress Continues to be Made

Mr. Chairman, the D. C. Public Schools ("DCPS") has made significant strides in addressing the deficiencies that were cited in the Authority's "Children in Crisis" report. Our efforts have focused on the safety, structure, and management problems of the schools. We think that the DCPS has made progress in tackling these long standing problems. Their efforts have laid the foundation for additional reform.

To achieve our educational goals, DCPS recruited Ms. Arlene Ackerman as the Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer. It was essential to the success of the reform efforts that DCPS hire a top flight Academic Officer with the leadership skills, hands on experience, and the expertise to lead and manage DCPS. It was important that the

candidates have the necessary skills to serve as CEO/ Superintendent. After conducting an exhaustive nation-wide search, the Trustees and General Becton, in consultation with the Authority, selected Ms. Ackerman. Ms. Ackerman has a wealth of experience and commitment to educational reform. She is an outstanding educator and administrator. She has served as a teacher, a principal, and central administrator. Before coming to DCPS, she served as the Deputy Superintendent for the Seattle, Washington School District. In Seattle she was responsible for academic achievement and district-wide educational support services. A copy of Ms. Ackerman's resume is attached to this testimony.

On March 27, 1998, General Becton announced his decision to resign his post as CEO/ Superintendent. On March 28, 1998, the Authority, after consulting with the Trustees and General Becton, appointed Ms. Arlene Ackerman to serve as the next Chief Executive Officer/Superintendent. The Authority appointed Ms. Arlene Ackerman to this position because we are confident that, under her leadership, the management and educational reform efforts will be continued without interruption.

Academic Improvement and Accountability

As Deputy Superintendent/ Chief Academic Officer Ms. Ackerman has implemented plans that will increase accountability for educational change throughout the school system. The D.C. Public Schools are holding principals more accountable, and where appropriate, principals are being replaced. The D.C. Public Schools have limited

the appointment of principals to one year, and removed the selection of principals from the previously politicized process. Fifty percent of a principal's evaluation now will be based on the students' academic performance. The D.C. Public Schools are also moving to make teacher evaluations performance driven. Principals and teachers are receiving training in the expectations supporting performance based management.

Higher academic standards are being instituted. On her arrival, the Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer implemented bi-annual testing using the Stanford Achievement Test Series Ninth Edition. This will help the schools to measure performance and develop solutions for improvement in the long term. Unfortunately, the results in the short term have been very disappointing at all educational levels. Fourteen out of 18 D.C. high schools had more than 90 percent of the students test below basic levels of proficiency in math.

To improve educational readiness, the administration is ending the practice of passing students on from grade to grade regardless of their performance -- so called "social promotion." The D.C. Public Schools are going to require students, that have not met the requirements for promotion, to attend summer school if they want to move to the next grade in the fall.

As the D.C. Public Schools continue to refine educational plans, to identify the critical actions and time frames for addressing the schools' most fundamental problems and attaining the goals inherent in quality education, the Authority remains convinced

that demonstrable improvements can be realized. The educational plan will also guide the development of administrative priorities to support the educational programs. Previously, changes were frequently made in a vacuum without an assessment of their impact on the attainment of educational goals. Under Ms. Arlene Ackerman's leadership, this practice is changing.

Conclusion

The Authority is pleased that Ms. Arlene Ackerman has agreed to serve as the next Chief Executive Officer/Superintendent. We will continue to work closely with her as she improves the educational achievement of our students.

Mr. Chairman, progress is being made in improving the public schools of the District. General Becton has made many achievements. We are confident that his recommended successor will build on his successes. We recognize that more work must be done. We are working to make sure that improvements continue to be made. The Authority remains committed to reforming the schools and ensuring that the District's children obtain a public education that provides them with a bright and productive future.

ARLENE ACKERMAN

Curriculum Vitae

EDUCATION

Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Ed.D., Administration, Planning and Social Policy,
Urban Superintendent's Program (Expected 1999)

Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Master of Arts in Education, 1993

Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri
Master of Arts in Educational Administration and Policy, 1981

Harris Stowe Teachers College, St. Louis, Missouri
Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, 1968

EXPERIENCE

Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer
1997 - Present District of Columbia Public Schools, Washington, D.C.

Serve as Deputy Superintendent/Chief Academic Officer responsible for academic achievement and all Districtwide educational support services.

Serve as Chief Executive Officer of the District in the absence of the Superintendent. Provides overall leadership and management of administrative and educational support services. Oversee budget of three hundred forty-six million dollars.

Deputy Superintendent
1996 - 1997 Seattle School District, Seattle, Washington

Served as Chief Educational Officer responsible for academic achievement and all Districtwide educational support services.

Served as Chief Executive Officer of the District in the absence of the Superintendent. Provided overall leadership and management of educational support services. Oversaw budget of eighty million dollars.

Aggressively pursued solutions to goals number one and two of the District Strategic Plan -- Goal #1/Increasing Academic Achievement and Goal #2/Eliminating Disproportionality.

Deputy Superintendent
1996 - 1997 Seattle School District, Seattle, Washington (Continued)

Established, maintained, and monitored the overall effectiveness of all schools within the District. Schools not meeting established standards were placed on plans for improvement through the Effective Schools Process.

Assisted Superintendent with evaluative process for principals and other administrators who directly report to the Superintendent.

Supervised and provided administrative direction, leadership, coordination and management over curriculum, instruction and academic achievement functions: Curriculum Services, Early Childhood Programs, Special Education, Bilingual Education, Compensatory Education, Pupil Support Services, Magnet Programs, Professional Technical Programs/School-To-Work, Professional Development, Gifted Education, Athletics, Comprehensive Health Services, Visual and Performing Arts, and Curriculum/School-Based Reform Initiatives.

Served on the Executive Administrative Review Team, a structure designed to facilitate consistent, equitable, and informed financial decision-making in alignment with District goals.

Served on the Executive Labor Policy Committee, a structure designed to provide general parameters and guidelines to the District's negotiating team.

Functioned as a unifying leader for students, teachers, staff and administrators while establishing and maintaining a very strong bond with parents, the community, business and civic leaders and unions.

Advised the Board on compliance with relevant state and federal laws and regulations that relate to the District. Formulate policies and reform efforts to recommend to the Board. Oversaw the development of said policies and reform efforts.

Provided professional development opportunities for principals and central administrators.

Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction and Academic Achievement
1994 - 1996 Seattle School District, Seattle, Washington

Provided administrative direction, leadership, coordination and management of the following services and programs: Curriculum Services, Early Childhood Programs, Special Education, Bilingual Education, Compensatory Education, Pupil Support Services, Magnet Programs, Professional Technical Programs and Gifted Education.

Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction and Academic Achievement
1994 - 1996 Seattle School District, Seattle, Washington (Continued)

Established division goals and objectives, division organizational structure and provided direction for the development, operation, supervision and evaluation of programs within the division.

Advised the Superintendent and Board of policies, regulations and laws which affected District operations. Supervised staff, recommended hiring, assigned work and established clear performance expectations for staff. Maintained state-of-the-art expertise in K-12 urban education.

Assistant Superintendent, Special Services
1991-92 University City School District, St. Louis, Missouri

Served as a member of the Superintendent's Cabinet offering expertise on instructional, student personnel and related issues. Developed agenda items for Board packets and made presentations at Board of Education meetings and professional development sessions. Developed and monitored all district policies related to special services.

Responsible for the administration and supervision of Districtwide student services including special education and the Gifted and Talented Education Program. Supervised district counselors and school nurses. Served as the district's hearing officer for all long-term suspensions and expulsions.

Supervised the administration of all district assessment activities providing schools with staff development and interpretation of test results.

Principal
1990-91 Brittany Woods Middle Schools and Ronald E. McNair Sixth Grade Center, University City, Missouri

Assumed the principalship of two separate schools serving a student population of more than 1,200 sixth, seventh and eighth graders and a staff of 135. Initiated major middle school restructuring initiatives including the implementation of a student advisory program, exploratory and enrichment classes, as well as, crisis intervention teams. Developed and implemented, in conjunction with local business partnerships, a banking system, employment program and community service projects for students.

Principal
1987-91 Ronald E. McNair Sixth Grade Center, University City, Missouri

Provided administrative and instructional leadership for the creation of the district's first Sixth Grade Center and major restructuring initiatives at the middle school level.

Developed an instructional program that included team teaching, interdisciplinary instructional units, block scheduling, an advisory program and full inclusion of students with special needs.

Coordinated the development of a study skills program and student organizer. Established partnerships with local businesses including a role models and literacy program with Southwestern Bell Telephone Company. Provided staff with extensive staff development in the areas of learning styles, 4-MAT lesson design and Jeff Howard's Efficacy Training. Student achievement increased over a three-year period.

Director of Funded Programs and Strategic Planning
1985-87 University City, Missouri

Supervised and monitored all federal and state programs. Served as the major grant writer for the district. Supervised the Gifted and Talented Program. Provided the superintendent with information and interpretations of state and federal legislation.

Responsible for the coordination and development of the district's strategic five-year plan. Assisted in the development of professional inservice for staff and coordinated the districtwide textbook adoption process.

Director, Upward Bound Program
1982-84 St. Louis, University
St. Louis, Missouri

Responsible for the administration of a pre-collegiate program for first generation college-bound students. Directed the overall administration of instruction and budget, as well as the supervision of staff.

Coordinated the development of an Advisory Board of 25 corporate, civic and educational leaders who secured additional funding, college scholarships and instructional equipment for the program.

Director of the Basic Skills Academy
1980-82 St. Louis, Missouri

Provided instructional leadership in the creation of a non-traditional tutorial program for academically "at risk" high school youth from a service area of ten school districts countywide.

Facilitated the development of learning style specific instructional curriculum and supervised the development and implementation of a recruitment plan for over 100 literacy volunteers.

Teacher
1968-80

University City School District - Teacher and coordinator of the elementary gifted program (1978-80)

University City School District - Early Education and classroom teacher (1974-78)

St. Louis Public Schools, Ritenour School District and Chicago Public Schools - Elementary and middle school classroom teacher (1968-74)

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Adjunct Faculty
1995-1997 Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, Washington

Taught a class for the Superintendent's Preparation Program on Improving Student Learning.

Adjunct Faculty
1995-1997 Antoich University, Seattle, Washington

Taught a class for the Teacher Education Program on K-12 Issues in Educating African American Students.

Superintendent's Intern
1992-93 Edmonds School District

University Supervisor - The PRINCIPALS' Center
1992-93 Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Responsible for supervising a 150-hour practicum experience for aspiring school principals. Facilitated the development of appropriate practicum experiences, monitored progress and implementation of standards for state certification.

Adjunct Faculty
1987 - Summer, 1993 Webster University - Graduate School of Education, St. Louis, Missouri

Taught graduate level course in motivation and gifted education.

Adjunct Faculty
1989-92 National Louis University - Teacher Education Program, St. Louis, Missouri

Core instructor for the Masters of Arts in Education Program. Taught methods, research and curriculum courses.

Regional Facilitator
1988-92 National Coalition of Marginal Learners and Responsive Schools, Danforth Foundation, St. Louis, Missouri

Coordinated the collaboration efforts of ten schools (located in St. Louis city and county) involved in major program redesign with an emphasis on high-risk students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Leadership St. Louis - Civic Progress and Danforth Foundation - Sponsors
Women in Leadership - CORO Foundation - Sponsors
Jeff Howard Efficacy Institute
Seminar on School Desegregation, Yale University
I.D.E.A. School Improvement Training
World of Difference - Facilitator Training, Prejudice Reduction Program
Total Quality Management Training
Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement (TESA) Training
Cognitive Coaching

HONORS AND AWARDS

Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities
Uniquely University City Award for Outstanding Service
Apple for the Teacher Award - Iota Lambda Sorority
Distinguished Alumni Award - Harris Stowe Teachers College
McDonnell Douglas Fellow - Urban Superintendent's Program

AFFILIATIONS/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Phi Delta Kappa - Harvard University Chapter
Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development
American Association of School Administrators
National Association of Black School Educators
Private Industry Council - Advisory Board Member (Past)
Seattle University - Dean's Advisory Board
Seattle Pacific University - Superintendent's Preparation Program - Professional Education Advisory Board Member
Pacific Oaks College Northwest - Professional Educational Advisory Board Member
Seattle Coalition of Educational Equity - Board Member
Mt. Zion Baptist Church Education Committee - Co-Chair

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Dr. MacLaury.

Mr. MACLAURY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Ms. Norton. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the academic program of the D.C. schools and the role of the Emergency Board of Trustees in supporting the ambitious goals.

The first stage of our academic planning began shortly after the trustees took office. About 16 months ago we released, a year ago, a draft framework entitled "Children First," which built upon the work of the D.C. Goals 2000 task force. It called for three basic thrusts: student achievement, quality of school staff, and school autonomy. A long-term plan based on this frame of mind was released last May, followed by a 1-year implementation plan. Both of these were subject to many public school—public hearings, and the 1-year plan benefited from broad public input.

While this was going forward, so was the national search for someone who could lead the academic office. And when Ms. Ackerman arrived, a far more vigorous stage of academic reform began. Ms. Ackerman has brought urgency, expertise, common sense and extraordinary dedication to her work, as you have heard. Upon arriving, she put her own imprint on the academic plan, and it was her revised version that we adopted at a public meeting on October 28 as the blueprint for the current school year.

In the past few months, Ms. Ackerman has articulated a set of steps that take us beyond the planning stage and into real standards-based improvement. You will hear directly from her on the next panel, but here I will mention just two of the initiatives that have won the trustees' full backing. The first is curbing social promotion, which we heard about; and the second is basing 50 percent of a principals' evaluation on their success in spurring student achievement. Please understand that these decisions are not punitive actions.

We must try to help the community understand that it is far more punitive to promote children before they have achieved mastery, and invite their increasing loss of self-esteem as they slowly get further and further behind. Nor need this be punitive for principals. We are not demanding that all students raised under their care achieve a certain level of excellence. We are simply demanding evidence that they are instilling new enthusiasm and effort in students and teachers to achieve improvement.

Nevertheless, we face the same criticism prevalent in many urban reform efforts, namely, that we are going too fast, that we are trying to accomplish it in three short years what some feel should take a decade. Others worry there's not sufficient alignment between the Stanford nine tests and the classroom curriculum, or they contend students should not be held back until other the other pieces of an academic reform are in place. But the trustees have supported Ms. Ackerman's recommendation because we know how important it is to get a start, here and now, to restore the value of a DCPS diploma.

We cannot afford to waste another generation. The supreme injustice to the children of D.C. is to send them into the world unprepared. Mr. Chairman, as trustees for the reform taking place in the school system, it is our job to make sure that every aspect of this

large organization supports the most critical goal of academic achievement. And I am sorry to say that that is not yet is case.

Our academic efforts are clearly focused. We have completed an enormous swath of critical facilities repairs, but our management systems are still woefully inadequate and not providing the information necessary for accountability, control and oversight.

In March of last year, the trustees developed a set of baseline indicators, measures by which the public could judge this administration's performance, but it has proven practically impossible to gather the actual baseline data for those indicators. Last November, we marked our first anniversary in office by releasing only a partial set, and we, the trustees, lost valuable time in the limbo of the period in January when we were out of business.

Now, we are more determined than ever to develop a set of performance measures modeled after those that are used in the Chicago school system, which will tell trustees, the administration, the members of the City Council, this committee, whether such progress is being made. We are meeting the terms of the—are we meeting the terms of the special education compliance agreement just signed with the Department of Education? How many fire code violations have in fact been abated? What number of teachers had to appear in person at the finance office to get paid this month? And so on.

This is the kind of data that is absolutely required by any organization trying to create quality improvements to support its central mission. But DCPS still does not have the culture that understands this, nor does it have the systems to produce this on a routine basis.

Oversight of the D.C. public school system is now a joint venture involving the Control Board with the trustees acting as their agent. We are working collaboratively to see that essential support services are improved. The Control Board is not only scrutinizing but in some cases strengthening the measures that we are taking, as they recently did in requiring tax documents as proof of residency for the children.

But the very heart of accountability is reliable data. Effective management and oversight require that we work from common assumptions. As Ms. Ackerman takes command of the school system, this is a matter on which she, the trustees and the Control Board must and will be working together.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. MacLaury follows:]

Testimony of
Bruce K. MacLaury
Chairman
Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees
District of Columbia Public Schools
Before the
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
April 3, 1998

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee.

I appreciate having this opportunity to discuss the academic program of the D.C. Public Schools, and the role of the Emergency Board of Trustees in supporting its ambitious goals.

The first stage of our academic planning began shortly after the Trustees took office. We released, in March of last year, a draft framework entitled Children First, which built on the work of the D.C. Goals 2000 panel. It called for three basic thrusts: student achievement, quality school staff, and school autonomy. A long-term plan based on this framework was released in May, followed by a one-year implementation plan. Both were the subject of public hearings, and the one-year plan benefited from broad public input.

But while this was going forward, so was a national search for someone who could lead our academic office. And when Arlene Ackerman arrived, a far more vigorous stage of academic reform began. Mrs. Ackerman has brought urgency, experience, and common sense to her work. Upon arriving, she put her own imprint on the academic plan, and it was her revised version that we adopted in a public meeting on October 29 as a blueprint for the coming school year.

In the past few months, she has articulated a set of steps that take us beyond a planning process and into real, standards-based improvement. You will hear directly from her in the next panel, but here I will mention just two of the initiatives that have won the Trustees' full backing: curbing social promotion by implementing new promotion and graduation requirements, so that no student moves to the next grade, or graduates, without mastering essential skills and knowledge; and basing 50 percent of principals' evaluations on their success in spurring student achievement.

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Some have criticized these steps as going too far, too fast – saying that we are trying to accomplish in three short years what some cities are taking a decade or more to do. Others worry that there is not sufficient alignment between the Stanford-9 tests and the classroom curriculum, or contend that students cannot be held back until all the other pieces are in place. But we have supported Mrs. Ackerman's recommendations because we know how important it is to start, here and now, to restore the value of a DCPS diploma.

My colleague Emily Washington, herself a veteran D.C. teacher, put it succinctly at a recent public meeting of the Trustees, when she said that social promotion had given the children of this city a "raw deal" – and that promotion gates would compel the alignment of other reforms to follow.

As Trustees for this system, we must make sure that everything in the organization supports the goal of academic achievement. Mr. Chairman, that is not yet the case. Our academic efforts are clearly focused; we have completed an enormous swath of critical facilities repairs; but our management systems are still not providing the information necessary for accountability, control, or oversight.

In March of last year, the Trustees developed a set of "baseline indicators" – measures by which the public could judge our performance. But it proved practically impossible to gather the actual baseline data for those indicators. In November, we marked our first anniversary by releasing the partial set.

We are determined to develop a set of performance measures, modeled after those used by the Chicago school system, which will tell Trustees, Administration, members of the City Council, and this Subcommittee, whether progress is being made. Are we meeting the terms of the special education compliance agreement just signed with the U.S. Department of Education? How many fire code violations were found in this month's inspections, and how many were abated? What number of teachers had to appear in person at the finance office to get paid this month?

This is the kind of data absolutely required by any organization trying to create quality improvements to support its central mission. But DCPS still lacks the systems able to collect and report it on a routine basis.

Oversight of the District's public school system is now a joint venture involving the Control Board with the Trustees acting as their agent. We are working collaboratively to see that essential support systems are improved. The Control Board is scrutinizing, and in some cases, strengthening the measures we are taking.

But the heart of accountability is reliable data. Effective management and oversight require that we work from common assumptions. As she takes command of the school system, this is a matter on which Mrs. Ackerman, the Trustees, and the Control Board must work together.

I look forward to your questions.

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Mr. DAVIS. Bruce, thank you very much. Let me just note for the record that we did invite Marion Barry and Ms. Wilma Harvey from the Board of Education to testify today, and they were out of town and declined. We will allow any statements they want to put into the permanent record.

I'm going to start the questioning with Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much. And I want to thank all three of these witnesses for the very helpful testimony.

I want to begin with Ms. Patterson, the Council member. There were great points in your testimony that I think are particularly important. Your citing of—from the "Grey Matters" series prompts a question from me for the others.

The new science on brain development is nothing short of revolutionary. Here in the Congress, the Women's Caucus had a hearing on it. We always knew, of course, that brains develop early and the rest of it, but it is astonishing how much of it occurs in the early years. And of course, you cite some of it. I mean, it suggests that almost everything we do ought to be done and kind—that the rest of it is icing on the cake.

For example, it ought to make people like me who have been a strong supporter of bilingual education wonder about whether she shouldn't immerse these children from the moment they hit the nursery school, so that they learn language when the brain apparently receives it most easily. I just think we all have to be open to what—to new understandings as they come forward, and not treat this stuff illogically or with any kind of fixed philosophical view of the world.

I would like to ask the three of you if you are in touch with this new understanding of brain development and how, if you pass it, certain kinds of things simply can happen, and, if so, whether that is reflected in the way resources are apportioned in the D.C. public school system? Beginning with Ms. Patterson, and then go to Dr. Ladner and Mr. MacLaury.

Ms. PATTERSON. To the extent that the Council has been able to make strong recommendations and even to do some line items in the school's budget over the last several years, there have been a couple of times when we have tried to put emphasis on prekindergarten, on kindergarten, reflecting the strong interest in making sure that our early childhood is very strong and universal. Beyond that effort to fund programs at that end of the spectrum, I'm not familiar with any work that we have done.

Ms. NORTON. I reckon that D.C. has done much better than most jurisdictions in adding its own money. And, indeed, I have a bill I'm writing that will encourage the Federal Government to give CEED money to encourage local school systems to put more of their money in early childhood education using this new science.

As you indicate in your testimony, it's hard once you get past the age of 10, and while you know the zero to three is one thing, but there obviously are in these early grades opportunities that just don't exist even in the later years of elementary schools. So I guess I'm also asking about elementary schools, and resources and other support in elementary school, and whether or not the D.C. public school system is getting to reflect those needs at all.

Ms. PATTERSON. We have not, the Council has not received proposals from the school system to take prekindergarten to scale in my time on the Council. That's something we need to work on collaboratively to make that a funding priority, in my view.

Ms. NORTON. Could I ask our other two witnesses, I'm not interested in simply prekindergarten, although I believe that in the—because I know what you've done there, and if I had my way that's where resources would go. I believe if you, in fact, move resources all there, you would then create great deficits. See, I'm really talking now about the elementary school, the lower elementary school grades. If that is the last clear chance for many disadvantaged children in particular, and for other children, from what we know from the science makes learning at least more difficult, is there any way that that can be reflected in the way in which you go about apportioning support and resources for the schools, for the schools in the lower grades?

Ms. LADNER. I think it can be. But I think that we've been under such tremendous constraints up to now that, certainly at the level of the Authority and setting a budget, we've not dealt with it thus far. I'm fully aware of the research that's going on in the brain.

And I think that one of the—in 1995, the first year of the Authority's existence, for example, a proposal to balance the budget would have meant cutting pre-K. And we made sure that we did not agree with that proposal, recognizing that—but I do believe that Ms. Ackerman can speak more clearly to that. And we would strongly, strongly support strengthening this early cognitive development of children.

Ms. NORTON. The President has indicated that every child should learn to read by the fourth grade. I think what he's telling—what he's telling us comes from his—from the latest research. You're going to teach—you can still teach a child to read in the second and third grade; try it in the fifth and sixth grade or later, you get a marked difference.

So in terms of reading, even, it seems to me in the lower elementary school grades one can make a tremendous difference if one understands that or finds a way to incorporate it into the early grades of school, probably, on the many children who will not get to kindergarten or pre-K.

Mr. MacLaury.

Mr. MACLAURY. Yes, Ms. Norton. A couple things come to mind. First, when Ms. Ackerman came, she moved back from third grade gate to second grade; that is to say, she pushed the emphasis on early learning back by a—a full year to the second grade. And now the emphasis, for example, in the "Everybody Reads" program is tutoring and extra support help in literacy for second graders.

Recognizing that, as you do, that every year that passes, it becomes harder and harder to catch people who are at risk of failure, that's one example, I think. The second is that, as you know, in the summer school—that is, the Summer Stars program that is being planned—the ratio for elementary school kids who are going to be taught is going to be 15 to 1. That is a dramatic change.

I wish, I only wish that we could have something like that year round. But at least a Summer Stars with 15 to 1 in the early grades, with a teacher's aide as well as a teacher in the number

of instances is, I think, reflective of Ms. Ackerman's emphasis on early childhood learning.

Ms. NORTON. It can help everything from your dropout rate to the academic achievement itself. And I know it's a difficult apportionment to make, but we've got to take the science and incorporate it into teaching.

Ms. Patterson, as part of her testimony that I regard is very wise, because she has pressed and she knows the Congress has pressed and the parents are pressing and everybody is pressing for standards, but the standards are somewhere down where we can't find them. But then she says high standards are important to communicate to children our belief and commitment; the danger of unrealistic expectations is also failure. And now when you have—I would just like to speak to whether—ask you questions about standards and meeting them. These children are doing very poorly, and it's very unnecessary.

I mean, for example, getting an early start, getting teachers who are—who had higher salaries, big cities, the only way they're going to attract teachers who want to come into these conditions is have the highest salaries. And we're not doing it, and there are a whole set of variables here.

But in light of those variables and how poorly these children are doing, I have to ask—I would like to ask first Ms. Patterson to comment on whether she has examples of what might be unrealistic expectations. The whole notion of low-hanging fruit, which we've had a lot of discussions with the Control Board about, comes to mind. I mean, if this system sees that there is some low hanging fruit, some things they can make happen right away, then of course you raise your standards as you go along. But are we in danger, as far as you're concerned, by setting the standards too high and too quick and therefore getting failure?

Ms. PATTERSON. I think there are a number of answers to that. I think the point was made earlier, some of the operational issues can be addressed on a pretty fast time track, and Dr. MacLaury spoke to that in terms of not being there yet. I think part of what I'm responding to is the nature of a particular hearing on the other side of the Hill within the last several weeks, where it's my understanding, although I was not there but from the reports I got, the school system personnel were pressed by Senator Brownback for exactly how much improvement in test scores will be met within 1 year, how much within 2 years. And that's what I meant by unrealistic—by unuseful pressure and unrealistic expectations.

I believe one of the previous witnesses said, Ms. Harvey or maybe it was Ms. Berlin, one of the previous witnesses testified that the best schools in Chicago, the best success they've had there in Chicago showed a 10 percent improvement over 3 years in test scores. So I think if anyone in the Congress, for example, is talking about turning the system around academically within 1 year or two, I think that is not realistic. And it can be very damaging in terms of trying to make the slow and steady, albeit slow, progress in improving educational achievement.

Ms. NORTON. Do you, Dr. Ladner, and you, Mr. MacLaury, believe that the standards for improvement are indeed realistic to meet? Now, I refer you to a front page picture, I haven't read the

article yet. It's in my "to read during recess" pile. But it was a front page picture in the Washington Post Magazine of a principal in a troubled school—and I forget its name—and there is a picture of him on the front with the youngsters beside him. It says he brought the entire school under control. It was completely in crisis. They named a number of things. But they say this principal may not meet the standards.

Let me ask you to use him as an example, and to use whatever other indicators you would like to cite, to indicate whether or not we are setting realistic measures over the next couple of years.

Mr. MACLAURY. I think that Ms. Patterson made the useful distinction between having a high standard and the speed with which one attains it. Progress is the name of the game. If—encouraging people that some progress toward those high standards is being made is the essence. I understand that many principals will feel threatened in our school system if they feel that they must achieve a certain level. That's the—that's what I want to emphasize, a certain level of achievement by them. But that's not the case.

Ms. Ackerman was very careful to say that the only place where we are measuring specifically this year—a tough year--the progress is in the targeted assistance schools, where those schools that are by definition the lowest performing, they must make a 10 percentage point increase in the test scores during the current year, or at least at that point be subject to reconstitution or redesign. So there's—the point is that having high standards is not a problem for anybody. If there are unrealistic speeds set to achieve those, that should be a real concern for everybody.

Ms. NORTON. Dr. Ladner.

Ms. LADNER. Yes. Just to echo—I agree with what both people have said. I also want to say that progress, as a career-long educator, progress is incremental and it doesn't—it cannot be achieved overnight. I think that regarding that same article—that is in my "to read" pile as well, as well as Congresswoman Norton—I scanned the first part of it, and it appears that this principal had been extremely effective in bringing a tough situation under control. And yet he was being measured by the journalists, at least, as someone who had failed because he hadn't brought the test scores up.

But I think that what we fail to take into account too often is how far down we are and how far we have to come from the bottom in order to reach a level where we can be and to achieve. So I would simply say that with regard to our schools, I think that incremental progress is what we should expect. And I think that we should be very patient in expect—setting time lines and goals, targets, and working hard, inch-by-inch, to achieve them. But the—there is no such thing in education as an overnight miracle and cure with regard to raising test scores. It just doesn't happen.

But also there are other ways of measuring the achievement of children, as well. The test scores is one, but we know that colleges don't—do not rely entirely on the—the SAT scores but on grade point average, on the courses that the student has mastered and other criteria. So I'm sure in the entire scheme of things that all of those will be looked at by the educators.

Ms. NORTON. The 10 percent figure I find amazing, perhaps especially because the students are as low as they are, because there are many factors that come into play when students are as low as the lowest, go well beyond the teacher. I only ask you to use your own experience with individual tutoring. If a student does 10 percent better on his SATs, that is a good SAT course.

Maybe Ms. Patterson has a point here, particularly if you are saying the lowest achieving schools, you are also talking about the schools where parents are single parents, where you may have parents disproportionately on welfare, where there may be parents disproportionately on drugs, where there is chaos. The last thing I want to do is to encourage any lowering of that standard, but I ask you to ask yourself, and we will have to ask Mrs. Ackerman to ask yourself, whether the best prepared students raise their SAT scores 10 percent when they take the most expensive courses.

Also Ms. Delabian Rice says in her testimony, "The system has frightened principals, teachers, parents and students alike by making the nationally respected SAT nine test count in determining whether students will be promoted, and by making improved student performance the main criterion for high evaluations."

They need to be frightened. But again, setting high standards is what the school system has lacked. I am not prepared, frankly, to say that the standards that have been set even for this 10 percent standard is not the correct one. But I do think that what Councilmember Patterson says, the only word I can call it, is wise. Sometimes we need, overlaying our nuts and bolts sense of the word, wisdom. The real question is, is whether all of the standards are wise and whether we might want to at the same time that we take a staff that obviously was not working energetically with these parents, whether or not we want to examine what the response is to make sure that there is not a misperception of what you regard as important.

Again, I offer no criticism here. I don't know what I'm talking about when it comes to whether or not these standards are correct or not. That's why I say what Ms. Patterson says is wise. She also isn't saying "don't do it," just saying be careful when you're dealing with a system that has been in the pits now.

Could I ask Mr. MacLaury a question, because I think Mr. MacLaury, in two parts of your testimony, you indicate, for example, in one part, the District is now in a joint venture involving the Control Board with the trustees acting as their agent. In another part you say, "As she takes command of the school system, this is a matter on which Mrs. Ackerman, the trustees, and the Control Board must work together." Altogether absent from even your rhetoric is the elected School Board. So you haven't even factored them into your brain as a part of the process.

I really have to ask you, since you have dumped this stuff back on the School Board in 2 years, all your work could be undone and you could have done us no favor with all the hard labor and time you have put into it.

Mr. MACLAURY. I take seriously the observation you just made, Ms. Norton. The fact of the matter is that in terms of actual responsibility at the moment, I think I accurately portray it. In terms

of coming responsibility, you are absolutely right. The School Board will be taking over by June 30, 2000.

As you know from our testimony the last time when Dr. Harvey, Wilma Harvey was present, you asked both of us to put together a transition plan. We have not got that plan, but we are working toward it. We have talked about it.

Ms. NORTON. Do you have any notion now about when we might see that plan? I don't want to put—I want you to concentrate on what you are concentrating on now, and I know the pressure you are under.

Ms. LADNER. I want to speak to that, because as I recall I took the lead in saying that the Authority would put together the transition plan and that we would consult with the Board of Education and the trustees on the plan. We thought that would be preferable to the trustees designing a plan for an elected School Board inasmuch as they are advisory. We will get their input. But we have begun staff discussions on the development of the plan. We promise you that within a couple of months, we'll have it.

Ms. NORTON. I think it says something about the need for involvement of the elected School Board, the people who have been most critical of the elected School Board and their desire to see them back into it, just to have some people that they can hold accountable and get what they need to get and help if they need to help them. I must say, Mr. MacLaury, the best way to take some of the heat off you is to involve people who deserve the heat, people who people have elected and can pull back and bring pressure on to do what they want to have done.

Mr. MACLAURY. I certainly agree with that. One further comment, we have made the distinction here between plans and actions. Though the plan may not be made, the fact is actions are taking place as we speak, that, as you, I believe you know, the trustees and the Board of Education jointly sponsored one of the many meetings that was held in the community, at Fletcher Johnson in this case, for the whole question of summer S.T.A.R.S. program, promotion gates and the rest.

I am in conversation with Dr. Harvey right now about another jointly sponsored hearing, about the new discipline proposal, the rules for discipline in the school, which we are tightening, proposing to tighten. It is very important in those instances that we get community input. We want to both, jointly, to sponsor some of those hearings.

Ms. NORTON. My first cut sense of your hearings on issues like that, I have no notion of what the proportion of School Board members or whatever, but I don't see how anything is to be gained by having a hearing on discipline in the school system without having the elected School Board there. I just don't see how anybody is ahead of the game there. What can they do? Hearing is to listen. You can say to people the way the chairman says to me when he wants me to shut up, he can say, "Eleanor, you have X minutes." You can say that those of you who are sitting down there as the elected School Board, you are timed as to how much you can filibuster, because we are here to hear from the people. But not having them there gives a terrible image and one that you don't deserve.

So the sooner you incorporate these folks into the hearing, let them take some of the heat, the better off the entire city is going to be, because there is going to be heat. Nobody involved in schools today does anything but take punishment. For those that don't want to be punished, there is something other than public life.

Could I ask about the funding of the summer S.T.A.R.S. program? Is any funding yet in place for the program?

Ms. LADNER. I can speak to that, Congresswoman. The Authority has been in discussions with the chief financial officer, Mr. Williams, about identifying funds for the program. We have also, working with the chief financial officer for the schools, trying to see if there are additional funds, ways in which funds can be reprogrammed there as well. We are committed—it is a fait accompli that we will indeed have the funding in place, but it is a matter of finishing it off.

Ms. NORTON. $10 million is a big hunk of change to have to come up with. I commend you for your determination to come up with it. I think if this works, this will be probably the first big city school system to abolish social promotion and put in its place something that works. You can abolish it all you want to but if you want 14-year-olds sitting in the sixth grade, that is an invitation for them to leave school.

All the Congress shouting and screaming about social promotion and then coming with vouchers doesn't take into account that the only way to do social promotion is to somehow make something happen, so that these kids get promoted. I don't know any school system that has abolished social promotion. Has any school system that you know of done it?

Ms. LADNER. Chicago did, when Steve Harlan and I along with staff went out to Chicago a couple of years ago. They abolished it. They did so within months, as I recall, before school ended. One of the things I remember them telling us was that they noticed an increase in the number of children who passed, because of the fear of having to go to summer school, I believe Jerry Chico stated to us. So we expect that while we are preparing for up to 20,000 children, the numbers may be in fact fewer. I think Mrs. Ackerman will speak to that. But she is not sure that there will be that many children.

Ms. NORTON. That's what I mean when I say success begets another problem.

One final question. What in very specific terms has happened to resolve the litigation between the Control Board and the elected School Board?

Ms. LADNER. I can speak to that in general terms, as general as you will allow me, Madam Chairman, because our counsel and I discussed that before the hearing, just in terms of the quiet discussions that have taken place. Edward Singletary, who is my backup for the oversight for the schools, and I, along with counsel on both sides, have met with several members of the elected board. We are awaiting further word on when our next meeting will be. We are indeed all committed to trying to develop what eventually will, I would hope, become the first stage of a transition plan. We fully are committed to trying to resolve not just the lawsuit but find more effective ways of getting the elected board back in the game.

I think that there is one thing—if there is one thing I would redo, it would be to try to rethink through a way in which we could have avoided the inevitable problem, but there was no easy solution at the time. I think that we're not the same place we were when we began the process. I would hope we will be effective in finding a way to get them involved stage by stage so that 2 years from now when they take over, and that there will also be a lot of other opportunities, for example, training in areas, fiscal and other areas so when they come back and do the oversight that they will have all of the wherewithal to do it. They've talked to us about staffing and so on. Those are the kinds of considerations that we very sincerely are discussing.

Ms. NORTON. Just let me, speaking now as a lawyer, offer one suggestion. I think what you are doing makes a lot of sense. You are trying to get the folks together, see what they want, then give that information to your lawyers. May I suggest that that is not the usual way in which lawsuits are settled? The lawyers need to be given all the information. They are trained to understand what your priorities are and to engage in negotiations across the table. Then to come back and say this is what I got, and to go back, if necessary, and say they told me they're not taking that or they're not taking half of that and they told us to go back to the drawing board.

But if you wait to go the other way, you will be doing what just isn't done. You will be trying to get people who are in fact not in the business of working out disagreements involved in a lawsuit, and then somehow the lawyers go in, having frankly had part of their role taken from them. You can always send them back. They know exactly that they are your agents. If they know what your priorities are, if they know what you can't live with, then they will be skilled at knowing what they can trade away or not, and they will know what kinds of permutations that they are empowered to make at the table and how much they can't give away, and they can even tear up the whole thing afterwards and come back.

The reason I press this, I press this because this is going to stand in the way of the School Board and the Board of Trustees really having an open field, as long as that lawsuit is out there. Both parties know it. Mr. MacLaury every time he comes resents it. I don't think he should resent it. When the people have their power completely taken away unilaterally, what are you supposed to do, say, "Thank you, I guess that's what I deserve"? That is contrary to human nature. They know that they were not doing their job well. They have been beat about the head and shoulders by everybody from the newspapers to the people themselves. So that if in fact we're going to get them together in time, let the lawyers go at it, admonish the lawyers, send them to the woodshed when they don't do right and make them start all over again, but please hasten this process up so that we can get this lawsuit out of the way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you. I just have a couple of questions for you before we get the next panel. First of all, the first panel raised the issue, Ms. Patterson, about budgeting for individual schools. What are the chances of that? How do you see that from your perspec-

tive? Can that happen in the unified budget that you will bring to the Congress?

Ms. PATTERSON. I don't think that will happen this year. That's been on the drawing board for about as long as I've been on the council, trying to have school-by-school budgets, but I don't think it's going to be in the 1999 budget.

Mr. DAVIS. Is it counterproductive to do that or is it a decent policy option, do you think?

Ms. PATTERSON. I think it's an excellent policy option. I think people need to know where the resources are and what the resources are in each individual school. There has been some modeling done by the last couple of CFOs at the D.C. public schools. It is certainly a question that we keep asking, where are your school-by-school budgets, but it has not been perfected.

Mr. DAVIS. That would not be technically impossible to provide, would it?

Ms. PATTERSON. No.

Mr. DAVIS. If Congress directed it be provided, it could be done very quickly, couldn't it?

Ms. PATTERSON. Again it's in motion. There is a lot of work being done on it. But I'm not sure it will be reflected in what comes here in 1999.

Mr. DAVIS. Bruce, any comment on that?

Mr. MACLAURY. It would be very helpful if the Congress directed and paid for the implementation of the financial systems that are necessary for school-by-school budgeting.

Mr. DAVIS. So it's not that easy to come up with without reprogramming different resources?

Mr. MACLAURY. Progress has been made in redefining budget categories. We have better handles on responsibility centers than we did a year ago. But we do not have school-by-school budgets yet and that is certainly my ambition. It should be anybody's ambition.

Mr. DAVIS. But it would take a fair amount of resources?

Mr. MACLAURY. It is taking resources, yes, sir.

Mr. DAVIS. I will try to move fairly quickly. Dr. MacLaury, could you update this subcommittee on the revisions to the residency verification rules we talked about in the last hearing?

Mr. MACLAURY. Yes. Dr. Ladner could also speak to that very same issue. Because the Board of Trustees did take public action on a proposed rulemaking on the residency requirements, and we tightened them, but then the Control Board in their review of our recommendation tightened them further.

My understanding is that now tax information, either withholding tax or other tax or proof of receipt of welfare payments, that is one of the pieces of evidence required out of the three that must be produced for a student to prove residency. So I think we've got on the books now the right foolproof evidences of residency.

The big challenge, Mr. Chairman, is going to be the implementation, as always. Because now at summer school, under the urging of this committee, summer school is going to be the first test of whether or not we've got this residency requirement workable or not. So Mrs. Ackerman, I must say, has once again her work cut out for her in trying to get summer school started with tougher than ever residency requirements being proven.

Mr. DAVIS. Just a couple of other questions, Dr. Ladner.

Ms. LADNER. Mr. Chairman, could I add to that?

Mr. DAVIS. Sure.

Ms. LADNER. The Authority added another provision; that is, that we would refer violators who falsify the residency requirements to the Federal attorney's office for prosecution. We are concerned that the first test of the residency requirement at the behest of this committee will come next summer. While we are trying to get as many children who need summer school as possible in summer school, we are also telling them that unless they come up with these documents, that they will not be able to attend. So it is going to cause a big wrinkle in the system, but we will try to do our best to implement it.

Mr. DAVIS. Dr. Ladner, it has come to my attention that a significant factor in the ability of the public schools to recruit, hire and retain staff has been a personnel system which has an antiquated information management system and has even resulted in losing staff because they can't get paid. Are you aware of these circumstances?

Ms. LADNER. Very much so. It is a very serious problem. There are major deficiencies in the personnel system. One of the things that's occurring is that the CAP system, comprehensive automated personnel system is being implemented throughout government. One of the things that the Authority has pressed the schools to do is to—the schools would maintain oversight for their own personnel. But we do want them to, the schools, to adopt the CAP system. It is not in place. I think that personnel is probably the area that still has the most very severe problems. I think that what's going to be required is nothing less than a high level SWAT team of people who can go in, who have experience in building personnel systems. We hear about files that are lost. Many of them have probably been lost for years, reconstituting files of payroll processing. We have strange customs here of rules where, for example, one FTE can be used, one salary can be used at the local school level to hire three part-time people and they may even supplement it with additional money. It is structurally about the most difficult system I have ever seen.

So there is no quick answer, short of Mrs. Ackerman being able to get some of the best talent in the country to bring them in there for a few months, fix these systems. It will require an investment, an initial investment, but it will be about the most important investment we could make.

Mr. DAVIS. Also, there appears to be a substantial number of professional educators in the D.C. public school system that will soon be eligible for retirement. Has this matter been examined and is there a strategy for dealing with this matter to minimize any adverse impact on the public schools should there be a large number of teachers who decide to retire?

Ms. LADNER. According to the DCPS, 757 teachers and 86 principals are eligible for retirement. We don't have accurate data yet on how many will in fact take retirement. Your question is absolutely correct. The schools are advertising in Education Week and other organs as well, they are having recruitment fairs, they are

going out to the universities, to conferences, and they have a very aggressive effort being made to recruit.

I think one of the most critical factors for us is that the entry level pay for the young, most qualified teachers in terms of the modern training, et cetera, the disincentive is that we pay less than the surrounding jurisdictions. We have to find a way to increase the entry level pay in order to stop being the training ground for your schools in your area and in other jurisdictions.

Mr. DAVIS. Also, getting a job as a school teacher in Fairfax County, it is probably easier getting appointed to the Supreme Court. You have 30, 40 people lined up sometimes for one job. But for math and science and some of these other areas where the alternative jobs in the private sector pay tremendously better, it is hurting us in the suburbs. It has to be just killing the city. Those are some of the key areas where the city needs to move ahead so that the division between the rich and poor in this country doesn't grow larger as we enter the Technology Age. It is a great challenge. I think you're aware, we will be happy to work with you to try to get your strategies to address it.

Ms. LADNER. Sir, we have identified these as critical areas. As you are aware, there are just such constraints on the budget now that we have not been able to deal with this. But whenever the Congress can give us the additional support for personnel, I think the key areas, as you have identified, were math and science and the entry level for new hires are the most critical.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me just thank you all very much. We could go on all day. We have another panel though. We appreciate very much your testimony. Again if you want to supplement anything as you come back, we will give you leave to put it in the record. I thank you very much for the job all of you are doing.

I now call our third and final panel to testify, which will consist of General Julius Becton, the CEO of the D.C. public school system, and Mrs. Arlene Ackerman, the chief academic officer. As both of you know, it is the policy of the subcommittee that all witnesses be sworn in before they can testify. If you would stand and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. DAVIS. Before we begin with General Becton, to be followed by Mrs. Ackerman, I want to make this point. General Becton, all of us who care about public education in the Nation's Capital owe you a debt of gratitude. You have approached your responsibilities with the professionalism, the dedication, the selflessness, the integrity which this country has come to expect from your brilliant career in public service. In my view, your efforts, while producing substantial results and giving us a road map for the future, have been underappreciated by some. I just want you to know that I do appreciate your accomplishments, and so does the committee. You are fully entitled to retire, for the reasons you have stated, with all the dignity and the honor which you have earned from your community.

Thank you for a job well done. I salute you. You may proceed with your testimony.

STATEMENTS OF JULIUS W. BECTON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND SUPERINTENDENT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS; AND ARLENE ACKERMAN, CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

General BECTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for those remarks. The fact that I am retiring does not mean I am leaving the country. I will be available to help in any way I can. But I thank you for inviting us to testify today on student achievement in the District of Columbia public schools. I am going to keep my remarks brief and let Mrs. Ackerman, deputy superintendent and chief academic officer, provide you with a detailed description of our plan to improve academic achievement in our schools. I do want to make a couple of comments before she begins, however.

As you know, as you just said, I did announce my intention to retire. On last Friday, as Dr. Ladner stated, the Control Board expressed its intention to make Mrs. Ackerman the superintendent and CEO when I leave the school system. They took this action with my full support and support of the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees.

During my tenure at the DCPS, I believe we have put a strong reform team in place, and that we have developed a clear academic mission and a plan to implement the academic reforms that are needed. Frankly, I could not in good conscience leave this system in June if that were not the case. I want to emphasize that, therefore, there will be an orderly transition.

As Mrs. Ackerman has said before, we have set a course of reform and we intend to stay the course. We will continue to implement the program that we have put in place to improve student achievement, which Mrs. Ackerman will describe to you in a minute, on the same timetable that we have shared with parents and the public as a whole. We know that our children have waited long enough for a system that serves them well. We do not intend to make them wait any longer because of this transition.

I know that questions have been raised about whether a national search should have been conducted for my replacement. Suffice it to say, we don't need one. We've got the right person. She was selected after a national search. I feel very, very comfortable about where she is and where she is going. I think you also heard that she had an opportunity to go to the Cambridge public schools and decided to take on the challenge of the District of Columbia instead. In quiet moments, as I have had in the past, she might ask herself why. You can take a look at the Council of Great City Schools' recent report on Seattle's reform effort to see what she did when she was up there. An excerpt from that report is attached to my statement for the record.

Before I turn it over to Mrs. Ackerman to describe our academic achievement plan, permit me to comment on two questions that you raised at the most recent hearing of several weeks ago; first, you suggested that we visit New York City and see how they do their student count. We have been in communication with the folks in New York. We talked to them as recently as this morning. They will call back this afternoon with two or three dates within the next few weeks for staff to visit and to pick their brains. They said they will assist us in any way they can.

Your other question dealt with our per pupil expenditure rate. You heard Mrs. Delabian Thurston say, according to Parents United, the numbers for D.C. public schools are the lowest in the region with the exception of Prince George's County. We have been waiting for these numbers to be finalized before we responded to your question. We will look at those numbers, and the methods used to get to them and report back to you. Our basic approach has been to take the number of students we have and divide them into the total number of dollars we spend, to get a basic per-pupil expenditure rate of 7,318. Parents United used a more complicated formula, and we intended to report for you on both methods.

Finally, I am happy to report that we have an agreement with the Corps of Engineers to provide services to us. The questions shall come up about what we have done in the past in the facilities area. Let me specifically mention some of the things that they will do to help us on our facilities effort, and then we can get on with the business of student achievement. Our memorandum of agreement with the Corps of Engineers will include facilities assessment, construction quality assurance, contract management, contract administration, facility management, engineering services, environmental compliance services, and such other services as may be necessary to support DCPS' facilities assessment, renovation, restoration, operations and maintenance efforts.

With that, Mr. Chairman, let me turn to Mrs. Ackerman to tell you how we are going to increase student achievement.

[The prepared statement of General Becton follows:]

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Chief Executive Officer
415 12th Street, N.W., Suite 1209
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STATEMENT OF J.W. BECTON, JR.
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 3, 1998

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to testify today on student achievement in the District of Columbia Public Schools. I am going to keep my remarks brief and let Mrs. Arlene Ackerman, DCPS' Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer, provide you with a detailed description of our plans to improve academic achievement in our schools.

I do want to make a couple of comments before she begins. As you know, I announced just over a week ago that I intend to return to retired life at the end of June. On last Friday, as Dr. Ladner mentioned, the Financial Authority expressed its intention to make Mrs. Ackerman the Superintendent and CEO when I leave the school system. They took this action with my full support and the support of the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees. During my tenure at DCPS, I believe that we have put a strong reform team in place and that we have developed a clear academic mission and a plan to implement the academic reforms that are needed. Frankly, I could not, in good conscience, leave this system in June if that were not the case.

I want to emphasize, therefore, that this will be an orderly transition. As Mrs. Ackerman has said before, we have set a course for reform and we intend to stay that course. We will continue to implement the programs that we have put in place to improve student achievement -- which Mrs. Ackerman will describe to you in a moment -- on the same timetables that we have shared with our parents and the public as a whole. We know that our children have waited long enough for a system that serves them well, and we do not intend to make them wait any longer because of this transition.

I know that questions have been raised about whether a national search should have been conducted for my replacement. I want you to understand that Mrs. Ackerman's appointment as Chief Academic Officer came after a lengthy national search and that she brought with her the necessary credentials not only to serve as the system's chief academic officer, but also as its superintendent. In fact, the position she turned down in order to come to Washington was as Superintendent of the Cambridge Public Schools. She came to us with extremely high recommendations from her colleagues in Seattle, where she served as Deputy Superintendent. A quick look at the section on Seattle from a recent report published by the Council of Great City Schools on progress in urban schools districts -- which shows solid gains in fourth graders' scores on standardized tests in math, language arts, and reading and improvement on the SAT -- is evidence that the praise she received was well deserved (see attached excerpt).

Mr. Chairman, I will now turn it over to Mrs. Ackerman to describe our academic achievement plan to you. After she concludes, we are both, of course, happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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urban Indicator
A Research Publication
Vol. 4, No. 2 March 1998

Signs of Progress: Preliminary Evidence of Urban School Comeback

Seattle

- Fourth grade mathematics scores on the *Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills* show large gains since 1994-95. That year the average mathematics percentile was 45. In 1996-97 it was 56; Language Arts percentile scores rose from 49 to 55; reading from 50 to 54.

- Five-year trend data show a 26 scale score increase on the verbal portion of the *SAT* and a 9-point increase on the mathematics portion. 1996-97 averages are 519 for the verbal portion and 518 for the mathematics portion.

- The number of security incidents has decreased significantly from 3,348 in June 1995 to 2,260 in June 1997.

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Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much. Mrs. Ackerman, welcome.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you and Congresswoman Norton about our plans for improving student achievement.

When I arrived at DCPS 6 months ago, I came with the understanding that the system was indeed in crisis. However, after a careful review of the results of the spring 1997 Stanford nine achievement test and other achievement data, I learned that the academic situation was even more serious than I had expected.

For instance, in reading, we found that 41 percent of our third graders were performing below basic, meaning that they have little or no mastery of fundamental knowledge and skills for this grade compared to just 25 percent of students nationally. Worse yet, by 10th grade, 53 percent of our students were reading below basic compared to the national norm of 26 percent. Clearly this performance is not acceptable. Neither do I believe it is representative of the work that our students are capable of doing. It is certainly not what we would expect of the Nation's capital city.

It is indeed a systemwide failure, both internally, I believe, in the District and externally in the community, the failure to provide our students with the necessary tools and opportunities for them to succeed. As gloomy as this may sound, I believe that out of this crisis comes a real opportunity to give the District students once again the quality education that they deserve and like many of the students who before them have certainly benefited from.

I know that working together, we can turn this system around. Our children's future depends upon the success of the adults in this community providing them with a world class education that will ensure that they have choices when they leave high school. I came to DCPS with a clear vision that I hope the entire community will embrace. That is, to create an exemplary school system that prepares our young people for college, for good jobs, and for life in the 21st century. To make that vision a reality, we must focus all of our energy and resources on making dramatic improvement, steady progress in the achievement of all of our students today in preparation for their world tomorrow. Clearly we know that success won't happen overnight. We know that. The community knows that. But we do need to make steady progress year by year, classroom by classroom, school by school. I believe we have already started.

I would like to talk a moment about the challenges we faced and some that we are still facing before I tell you what we've done and where we're going. When I arrived, I found, I said, a system in crisis. What does that mean specifically? It means that there was no systemwide accountability. There were no performance standards, and there was no uniform curriculum. Staff development, while plentiful, was unfocused. The central office personnel, payroll and financial systems were badly broken. The procurement system remains one that is slow and difficult for our school principals to use. We have trouble accessing basic data on the system's budget, students and staff, for use in monitoring our ongoing activities, or for planning strategically for the future.

Finally, what I found upon arrival was a community not yet focused in a unified way on education as the city's No. 1 priority in

a way that will mobilize resources to increase student achievement. But we are moving forward. We have developed an academic plan that has set four goals for the system: improving student achievement, ensuring quality staff, increasing accountability throughout the system, and promoting school restructuring and parental choice. We are moving ahead on all of these fronts.

First, we are implementing standards. We are saying clearly to students, teachers and parents that this is what we expect our children to know and be able to do. We have established content standards in reading and math. And we are teaching parents what those standards mean for their children.

We have provided the committee with copies of two of our most recent newsletters for parents on these topics. We are using the Stanford nine achievement test, which is aligned with these standards to determine where students are in the fall and the progress that they have made in the spring. Because we know that test scores don't give us a complete picture of student performance, we are also using other tools to measure student progress in meeting the standards.

Students who do not meet the standards will not be promoted to the next grade at the end of this school year. Ending social promotion is not an easy task and, frankly, it is a step that not every school district has been willing to take. But we know that this is what we must do to ensure that our students leave this school system with the skills they need to succeed.

To support our students at risk of nonpromotion, however, we are extending the opportunities for them to learn. This comes in the form of additional time working on literacy skills during the school day, tutoring support after school and on Saturdays in many schools, and our new summer S.T.A.R.S. program. I want to talk a little bit about our summer S.T.A.R.S. program, because I think it is a good example of how serious we are about student success.

Summer S.T.A.R.S. will give students an intensive, highly structured opportunity to gain critical skills with 2 hours of reading and 2 hours of math each morning, and enrichment opportunities in the afternoons. Summer S.T.A.R.S. will be led by our best principals and highly qualified teachers working with students in smaller groups than they are usually working with during the school year.

Our second priority is accountability. We are holding people accountable across the system for student performance. We have instituted a new principal evaluation, which 50 percent of the principal's evaluation is based on student achievement. Every principal in this school system is expected to show improvement in his or her school this year. In addition to student performance, we will use surveys of parents and teachers and students to help us measure school performance.

Next year we will institute a new evaluation system for teachers linked directly to performance. In addition, we have instituted performance based criteria for the evaluation of central office administation which is also linked to their success with schools. We are instituting an annual school review process to look at how each school in the system is doing, comparing them to other schools in the system, and then comparing their performance to their own last best record. Schools that show a pattern of low performance

will be eligible for reconstitution, meaning a new staff will be put in place and a research-based reform model will be implemented there.

We are going to publish school-by-school report cards so that parents can easily evaluate the performance of their children's schools and make decisions about them accordingly.

Our third priority is professional development. I know that people must not only be committed to success, they must have the skills they need to succeed. We are providing focused professional development for principals and teacners on standards, curriculum, instructional strategies and classroom management. We are training 100 percent of our staff in our lowest performing schools and we hope to reach 25 percent of our teachers systemwide this year. We intend next year to institute mandatory professional development requirements in the new teacher evaluation process.

Finally, we have made public engagement a priority. We know that this effort has to be supported, both internally and externally. Most of all, we need parents to be involved in the education of their children, both at home and at school. We are making dramatic changes in this District. I have made a concerted effort to reach out to parents and engage them in real, meaningful discussions about these changes. This is a beginning.

In fact, we have already held eight meetings to talk with parents about test scores, about the new standards, about promotion guidelines and about our summer S.T.A.R.S. program. These meetings for the most part have been well-attended and parents have expressed a real interest and appreciation for being active participants in this effort.

We are looking to the future, and we are making progress. But I must tell you that we will need more resources to get the job done. In the next school year, we will need almost 150 new reading resource teachers, one for each school, to provide the extra help that many of our students need to improve their reading skills. We will need additional math teachers in all of our senior high schools where, as you know, our student math scores are really unacceptably low in almost every school. We will need additional staff in our middle schools so that we can transform them into small learning communities that work for children at this critical transitional stage in their education and development. And we need resources to support afterschool programs for our middle school students.

We need support for continued large scale professional development for teachers and administrators and funding for additional staff to implement proven research-based reform programs in our lowest performing schools. We also need technology to access data on our students and staff in a timely fashion and to manage our fiscal resources effectively. We need the resources to offer our teachers competitive salaries, so that we can attract and retain the best and the brightest for our students.

Finally, we need a level playing field. We must improve our performance, but we must also be held to the same standards as other jurisdictions. In special education, for example, this means that we'll need help from you, to give us a time line for evaluating children and placing them in programs that address their special needs.

Finally, we need parents, policymakers and the community as a whole to stand with us and to give us their time, their energy and commitment. It truly does take a village to raise a child. We must all be invested in the success of this effort.

I want to close by saying that there are pockets of excellence throughout this school system. There are schools that work, there are programs that work. There are dedicated, talented educators working on behalf of our children. But we need more focused resources, both human and fiscal; if we get these resources, we promise to graduate students who have strong basic skills, we promise to graduate students who are technologically competent, we promise to graduate students who are knowledgeable about their careers, we promise to graduate students whose special needs have been served by our schools, we promise to graduate students who are culturally aware and students who are physically fit. In short, we will graduate students who are prepared today for their world tomorrow.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Ackerman follows:]

STATEMENT OF ARLENE ACKERMAN
DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT AND CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 3, 1998

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to testify today. I am Arlene Ackerman, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Academic Officer for the District of Columbia Public Schools. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you about our plans for improving student achievement at DCPS.

Background

When I arrived at DCPS six months ago, I came with the understanding that the system was in crisis. However, after careful review of the results of the Spring 1997 Stanford 9 Achievement Test and other achievement data, I learned that the academic situation was even more serious than I expected.

For instance, in reading, we found that 41 percent of our third graders were performing "below basic" (meaning they have little or no mastery of fundamental knowledge and skills for this grade level), compared to just 25 percent of students nationally. Worse yet, by 10th grade, 53 percent of our students were reading "below basic," compared to just 26 percent nationally. In math, the statistics were even worse. Fully 89 percent of our tenth graders scored "below basic" in math, compared to a national average of 61 percent.

Clearly, this performance is not acceptable. Neither is it representative of the work our students are capable of doing. It is certainly not what we expect of the nation's capital city. It is a system-wide failure -- both internally, in the district, and externally, in the community -- to provide students with the necessary tools and opportunities to succeed.

As gloomy as this sounds, I believe that out of this crisis comes an opportunity to give the District's students, once again, the quality education they deserve. I know that, working together, we can turn this system around. Our children's future depends on the success of adults in providing them with a world class education that will ensure that they have choices when they leave high school.

A Vision for Student Success

I came to DCPS with a clear vision that I hope this community will embrace: to create an exemplary school system that prepares our students for college, for good jobs and for life in the 21st century. To make that vision a reality, we must focus all of our energy, and resources, on making dramatic improvement in the achievement of all students today in preparation for their world tomorrow.

Clearly, success won't happen overnight. We know that. The community knows that. But we need to make steady progress, year by year, classroom by classroom, school by school. And we have already started. But I'd like to talk a moment about the challenges we faced -- and some that we are still facing today -- before I tell you what we've done and where we're going.

I said I found a system in crisis. What does that mean, specifically? It means there was no system-wide accountability, there were no performance standards, and there was no uniform curriculum. Staff development was not focused. In the central office, personnel and payroll systems were badly broken. The procurement system was extremely complicated, slow, and difficult for school principals to use. Basic data -- on the system's budget, students and staff -- could not be accessed for use in monitoring ongoing activities or planning strategically for the future. Finally, the community was not unified in its focus on education as this city's number one priority in a way that mobilized resources to increase student achievement.

We are moving forward. We developed an academic plan in October that sets four goals for the system: improving student achievement, ensuring quality school staff, increasing accountability throughout the system and promoting school restructuring and parental choice. We are moving ahead on all of these fronts.

Performance Standards

First, we are implementing standards. We are saying clearly to students, teachers, and parents: this is what we expect children to know and be able to do. We have established content standards in reading and mathematics and we are teaching parents what those standards mean for their children. We are using the Stanford 9 achievement test, which is aligned with these standards, to determine where students are in the fall and the progress they have made by the spring. Because we know test scores don't give us a complete picture of student performance, we are also using other tools to measure student progress in meeting the standards.

Students who do not meet the standards will not be promoted to the next grade at the end of this school year. Ending social promotion is not an easy task -- and, frankly, it is a step that not every school district has been willing to take -- but we know that this is what we must do to ensure that our students leave this school system with the skills they need to succeed. To support students at risk of non-promotion, we are providing extended opportunities to learn -- in the form of additional time spent working on literacy skills during the school day, tutoring support after school and in Saturday academies, and our new Summer STARS (Students and Teachers Achieving Results and Success) program.

I want to talk a moment about the Summer STARS program, because I think it is a good example of how serious we are about student success. Summer STARS will give students an intensive, highly-structured opportunity to gain critical skills, with two hours of reading and two hours of math each morning and enrichment opportunities in the afternoon. Summer STARS will be led by our best principals and staffed by highly qualified teachers working with students in smaller groups than we have during the school year. We expect up to 20,000 students to participate in Summer STARS this year.

Accountability

Our second priority is accountability. We are holding people accountable, across the system, for student performance. We have instituted a new principal evaluation system in which fifty percent of a principal's evaluation is based on student achievement. Every principal in the system will be expected to improve student performance this year. In addition to student performance, we will use surveys of parents and teachers to help us measure school performance and customer satisfaction. Next year, we will institute a new evaluation system for teachers linked directly to student achievement.

We are instituting an annual school review process, to look at how each school in the system is doing, compared to other schools and compared to its own performance in past years. Schools that show a pattern of low performance will be reconstituted -- meaning a new staff will be put in place and a research-based reform model will be implemented there. We are going to publish school-by-school report cards, so that parents can easily evaluate the performance of their children's schools and make decisions about them accordingly. Finally, I am holding my central office staff accountable for improving student achievement, by evaluating them on the basis of how they support schools. Again, we will use surveys to determine whether customer service in the central office is improving.

Professional Development

My third priority is professional development. I know that people must not only be committed to success; they must also have the skills they need to succeed. We are providing focused professional development for principals and teachers on standards, curriculum, instructional strategies, and class management. We are training 100% of staff in our lowest performing schools and we hope to reach 25% of teachers system-wide this year. I intend to institute mandatory professional development requirements next year.

Public Engagement

Finally, we have made public engagement a priority. We know that this effort has to be supported both internally and externally. Most of all, we need parents to be involved in the education of their children both at home and at school. We are making dramatic changes in this school district and I have made a concerted effort to reach out to parents and engage them in real, meaningful discussions about these changes. We already have held eight meetings with parents to talk about the test scores, the new standards, the promotion guidelines and summer school. These meetings, for the most part, have been well attended and parents have expressed a real interest in being active participants in this effort.

Looking to the Future

We are making progress, but I must tell you that we will need more resources to get the job done. In the next school year, we will need:

- almost 150 new reading resource teachers -- one for each school -- to provide the extra help that many of our students need with reading,
- one additional math teacher in all of our senior high schools, where, as you know, our students' math scores are really unacceptably low in almost every school,
- additional staff in our middle schools, so that we can transform them into the small learning communities that work for children at this critical transition stage in their education, and resources to support after-school programs for those same students,
- support for continued large-scale professional development for teachers and administrators, and
- funding for additional staff to implement proven, research-based reform programs in our lowest performing schools.

We also need the technological infrastructure to access data on our students and staff in a timely fashion and to manage our fiscal resources effectively and we need the resources to offer our teachers competitive salaries, so that we can attract and retain the best and brightest for our students. Finally, we need a level playing field -- we must improve our performance, but we must also be held to the same standards as other jurisdictions. In special education, that means help from you, in Congress, to give us a reasonable timeline for evaluating children and placing them in programs that address their special needs.

Finally, we need parents, policymakers and the community as a whole to stand with us and give us their time, energy and commitment. It truly does take a village to raise a child and we all must be invested in the success of this effort.

With these resources, we promise to graduate:

- students who have strong basic skills,
- students who are technologically competent,
- students who are knowledgeable about careers,
- students whose special needs have been served by our schools,
- students who are culturally aware, and
- students who are physically fit.

In short, we will graduate students who are prepared today for their world tomorrow.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to respond to your questions now.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you both very much, once again in appreciation for the job you have done.

I will address one item, and that is new resources. Though it is a difficulty up here, it is getting a little better. For the new resources we put in, will we be getting any value added for that? The history of the city prior to the Control Board was that new dollars would go in for new resources but there was very little to show for it. I think, however, you have a good plan here together that will boost our confidence level and help you get the resources that you need.

Mrs. Ackerman, you are presently operating with a 1997–1998 academic plan that establishes clear goals and objectives and you have described that plan as an ongoing work in progress. What is the plan for year 2 and beyond?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. It was indeed the first year that was reflected in the academic plan provided to the committee. We do evaluate the progress we've made on the current goals and have to come up, I believe, with strategic actions and strategies to be taken in year 2. I believe that could be another opportunity to engage the community in strategic planning. I do believe that the plan should be long-range. We started with a 1-year plan. I believe it should eventually cover 3 to 5 years. In year one, I think we have some fine goals. I believe that with community input we can expand those goals with a few additional that have a more targeted focus. Ultimately, I hope we can put in place a strategic plan that will allow us to focus and align all of our resources for the next 3 years.

Mr. DAVIS. What do you view as the role of the business community, the nonprofit community, the clergy and other community organizations in the effort to improve student achievement in the city?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I believe that it does take a village to raise a child and that it is the responsibility of everybody in this D.C. village to make that happen. There is also a role for our clergy. We recently reached out, working with the Mayor's office, to our clergy. We have come up with a seven-point plan where we will engage our faith communities with specific strategies to support the schools. In other school systems, including the one that I just left, we had an "Alliance for Education" that was made up of major businesses. Their major focus was to support the schools.

There are a lot of different ways that I see that we can engage our community—our business community and our larger community—by presenting them with a plan and with specific areas of focus. We have tried to do that and I have been excited about the response we've gotten in the last few months. Here in the District I have asked businesses for help; I have asked them for loan executives, and the World Bank has stepped up offering to donate to the school district 67 weeks of staff time to help us with some of our management.

Mr. DAVIS. That is not in the classroom, because you have certification issues.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. No, we are talking about management reform. They have offered 67 weeks of staff time to help us with management reform. I think more of that from our business community

would certainly be helpful to us as we try to reform our management side of the house.

General BECTON. May I comment on that, too?

Mr. DAVIS. Sure.

General BECTON. In addition to the loaned executives, we also have IPAs from the government in some of our schools who are certified as teachers. Finally, Mrs. Ackerman in her summer S.T.A.R.S. program has asked some businesses to provide support for the afternoon extra curricular or noncurricular programs for students.

Mr. DAVIS. There is a lot of talent in this city in science and math that you could get in the classroom, too, if you could get around certification. I think other jurisdictions have worked through that. Charter schools are one way that allows that to work. There are probably other strategies, too. What do you view as the role of the charter schools in the overall strategy for student achievement and improvement in the District?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I think the role of the charter schools is to provide for our parents choice. I do believe very much in parental choice and that our public schools ought to be able to offer parents a variety of instructional educational programs for their children. I see that as a support of what we're doing in the public schools, as we're trying to provide quality programs to all of our students.

Mr. DAVIS. I am glad to hear you say that. If you don't have choice within the public school system, they're going to seek it outside. I really believe that the public school system has to change with the times to be competitive to meet the parents' needs.

You have a daunting task ahead of you. I am really encouraged by what I have heard today. Your testimony is inclusive. We are going to continue an ongoing dialog.

Ms. Norton made the remark before she had to leave unexpectedly, about how inclusive this was. Yet this is just the beginning of an ongoing dialog we need to engage in here today. We wanted to give you an opportunity to come up and present your vision as well as have other groups. I think we have achieved that.

General Becton, I think you have made some initial steps that allow this next phase to come into being and be made possible. Once again, everybody who touches the city and tries to make improvements gets eaten up by different groups who go unsatisfied by complaining. That is just part of it. I have had our house picketed out in the suburbs. You have to get used to that and recognize that the vision that you have is a good vision. It is one that if we will follow through, and know that we need to go from A to B, we still may not get there as directly as we would like to because we have to allow participation and input. But the vision is a sound one, one that has been implemented across this country, where it has been implemented and funded fully. If we will continue on that path we have started, I think we can look back in 3 to 4 years and see some very measurable changes and success.

When we talk about moving a tax base back into the city and a middle class back into the city, you can't do it without an educational system that people can have confidence in. Once again, I think we have started that. You are going to continue it. General Becton, I think you leave the system in some good hands as we

move forward. I just want to assure you that you will get full cooperation from this committee and others. Sometimes that gives us the right to sit down and work out issues and disagreements we may have. We appreciate your willingness to undergo this and, General Becton, for the service you have given to this city. I do think it has been underappreciated. We recognize the difference that it has made and the base that you have laid that will allow Mrs. Ackerman and her troops to succeed in the future.

Thank you both very much for being here. I want to thank all our panels for their input. General Becton, I think you reflected on some things you would do differently. At the end of each day I look at things I would do differently. There isn't a day that goes by that I didn't do something that I might have improved on it. I appreciate that kind of candor. But in working with some of the parent groups out here, and in working with your staff, we all want the same result. We have disagreements along the way but if we can continue that dialog, I think we can make the educational system here one we can be proud of, one which Members of Congress can send their kids to today.

Ms. Norton talked about her being a graduate of the District of Columbia public school system, so am I. I think we can make that a great system again. Thank you very much. I want to thank all the panelists for being here today.

The record will be open for 10 days. This meeting is now adjourned.

Thank all of you very much. The meeting is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

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